

"Baptized by one Spirit into one body"

1 Cor. 12.

Lecture 8 of 'The New Testament Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.'

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I propose to treat now of some of the mighty effects of the presence of the Holy Ghost. One of these is here designated as His baptism, by which He forms a new and united body, the body of Christ upon earth. Not only is this an exclusively New Testament truth, but, even within the New Testament, the revelation of it to us was confided to one apostle. No man can find it, save in the writings of the apostle Paul. I do not mean, of course, that there was no such thing as the Church of God, the body of Christ, before that apostle was raised up of God to make known this great truth. I do say, that while the mystery of Christ and the Church was revealed to God's holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit, it was revealed not by them all, but by one. This is a plain matter of fact. None of the New Testament writers but Paul speak of the Church as Christ's body.

Now there was a remarkable fitness in the history of Paul, as brought before us in the sacred writings, for the work which God confided to him, as far as its revelation to us was concerned. He had been an enemy so long as the testimony even of Christ Himself glorified on high was confined to the Jewish people. He was the witness of the martyrdom of Stephen; he was the active emissary of the Jews in persecuting all — men and women — not merely in Jerusalem, but pursuing them from city to city in their sad and, at the same time, blessed flight (for God honoured it to win fresh souls to Christ). He, in the fulness of the hatred he bore to the name of Jesus, had received, as we all know, letters from the highest religious authorities of that day, in order to prosecute their destruction the more energetically and, withal, piously. In the midst of this, when God was changing the form that His ways took upon earth, so that the tide of blessing was no longer flowing towards Jerusalem, but from it, when all that then constituted true glory (for indeed all was of grace in Jerusalem) was trampled down or dispersed, the Spirit of God points, as it were, outside, seeks and blesses the old enemies of Jerusalem, not only works among the Samaritans, (and we know what their jealousy was of Jerusalem,) but even a stranger from a distant land is sought by the Lord, who is met in nothing but grace, in spite of the grossest ignorance of that which God had just accomplished in Jesus, and sent on his way rejoicing, — not up to Jerusalem, but returning to his distant home from it.

It was at this juncture that it pleased God to deal with Saul of Tarsus on his road to Damascus; for he too was going from Jerusalem, full of persecuting fury against the confessors of Jesus, dark as night to the true grace of God; he, on the mission of sorrow, shame, and death, such as the world could give; he, with his commission such as Satan alone, borrowing God's name, could instil energy to carry out; he, nevertheless, with a good conscience as a man in the midst of all this blindness to the truth, — he is struck down suddenly with a light brighter than the sun at noon, but withal, even in that which blinds him naturally, was enabled to see supernaturally the Lord of glory, to hear the voice of his Lord, to know himself called, not as a saint only, but as an apostle too, not merely to taste the grace of which he was to be so remarkable a witness, but to minister with the Lord's authority, not for that day only, but for all times, not for one land, but for every country under heaven. That blessed man was given, in the very words that converted his soul, the gem of that great truth on which I hope to speak a little now. He

learnt, to his amazement, from One that he could not doubt to be the Lord, both that He was Jesus — wondrous knowledge to burst upon his soul! — but that this glorified Lord, who was Jesus of Nazareth that had been crucified, identified Himself with the objects of his unrelenting persecution: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." The work was done — not all at once, as far as regards the enjoyment of the soul, but surely, as communicated in substance to one thus strangely converted. The first and last that had ever been arrested by a revelation of Jesus, which revealed also in principle the Church of God, was precisely the suited one to develop this and enforce it practically, as well as in his writings, to lay the foundations of the Church of God, to insist upon its heavenly character as Christ's body, and to do battle for God's glory in it. This became his life; to this God henceforth called him by Jesus Christ our Lord.

It was Paul who at once, after he was converted, began to preach the Lord Jesus, not only as the Christ, but as the Son of God (Acts 9) — another great point of his writings. I do not say that this is so characteristically, or at any rate so exclusively, his as the body of Christ; but I remark it to show the largeness in the ways of God displayed by the blessed apostle. Although the Church of God rather attaches to Christ viewed as the exalted man, yet still He who is the man exalted in heaven is the Son; and, (if I may be allowed such an expression reverently) God does use the utmost care to enforce the relationship of Christ to Himself, as well as that in which He stands to us in His place as man at His own right hand. He accordingly was not led by the Spirit of God merely to insist on what others had done before. He did not merely draw attention to His being made Lord and Christ, as Peter did; he did not speak of Him as God's servant (παῖδα), for such is the true meaning of the term that is improperly translated "Son" in Acts 3 and 4. There was no preaching as yet of Christ as the Son. As to Acts 8: 37, in which the Ethiopian eunuch is supposed to confess that Jesus is the Son, every person moderately acquainted with these matters knows it to be spurious. But Paul, instead of limiting his teaching to Christ as the man exalted above, preaches at once in the synagogue that Jesus was the Son (υἱός) of God. This I conceive to be well worthy of note, as admirably exemplifying the largeness of heart wherever Christ, and Christ seen above, is the object of the soul. One is free, then, to think of all His glory; one delights in it; there is no hesitation in accepting the truth of God, and the importance of the truth is realized by the soul.

If I look upon Him merely on earth, progress is incomparably slower. We find this in the case of the other apostles even. How easily they mistook, how slowly they received, how they had to be led on step by step! In the apostle Paul, no doubt, the truth was allowed to settle down through conscience; for even he must have it thus. No man otherwise can have it, or make it really his own in his soul; and this because we are not merely men — we are sinners. The apostle Paul himself, a man walking with as good a conscience as any man ever had since the world began, — even he must learn the worthlessness of flesh, and must learn it for and in himself. He must learn it by Christ, but he learnt it in his own heart: still, thus learnt, the result is always bright. That which we are not told had been said to him the Holy Ghost enables him to seize. I say not how it was; for certainly the Lord Jesus had said nothing about it in what passed, as far as we know; but he was given of God to know it. God does not direct our attention particularly to Sonship in what passed between Christ and Saul. Still, the fact is, that the two grand truths of Christ's glory, as Son and as the heavenly Head, became henceforth his testimony. It is not merely that He is Messiah on earth: this was now no longer to be insisted on; the Lord Himself had put an end to the preaching of it even before He left the world. (Matt. 16: 20; and especially Luke 9: 20-22.) Then came a new thing.

After Jesus went up to heaven, He was made Lord and Christ. His being Lord is the very simplest acknowledgment, the lowest form of the recognition of Christ, that he who confesses Him can make,

because it is simply the assertion of His authority; and it is clear that authority, although most true, is after all the lowest side of the truth in Christ. It does not bring out His grace; it does not display His infinite glory. It is what He was made, not what He was and is in Himself. It is not, therefore, what is proper and intrinsic, what is personal and eternal, but a place that was given Him, which He assumed, which He was exalted into. The apostle Peter and the others, as we saw, preach this. Then Stephen sees Him after another sort. Thus, though it were by the full power of the Spirit of God working on earth, still even so there was gradual advance, and the discovery in his own person how totally rejected is the truth of God as to the exalted Lord and Christ. He bears his witness that He was the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. That is, just as upon earth the testimony to the Christ-head, so to speak, of Jesus gave place to His being the rejected Son of man, so the exalted Lordship of Christ, being Lord and Christ, gives place to His being the Son of man in glory. Finally, Paul not only at once enters on the truth that had been known before, but in the germ of it, at least, learns the great mystery, that Christ and the saints he was persecuting were one; yet, instead of being shut up in the narrowness to which we know our little hearts are so liable, he, on the contrary, immediately preaches Him to be the Son of God.

Now, I do think that this is a most blessed fact to bear in mind, more particularly in its moral bearing upon our own souls, as showing how, when things are viewed aright, when Christ Himself is viewed in heavenly light by the teaching of God's own Spirit, the fulness of the glory of His person is seen in what is beyond. For His being the Son of God, if it less connect itself with us in particular; is after all in itself a higher truth than any glory He could have even as exalted in any way whatsoever at the right hand of God. Not that one would too curiously compare or set one thing against the other: there is no reason for; this; but we would assert and maintain the whole truth of Christ's glory. And I am persuaded we shall find that all power to apprehend, enjoy, apply, and walk in all the rest of the truth, depends on the measure in which the truth of His personal glory is felt and owned by our souls. Just as Christ Himself becomes exalted before us, so all else, even things most distant, as it were, the very skirts of His glory, will be found to be enlarged and brightened according to that which we see here. So, on the other hand, all attenuating, enfeebling, corrupting, and destroying of the truth of God will be found to be traceable to men's low and still lowering views of Christ Himself. It is well that all this should be seen and appreciated. We shall find the bearing of this in what is coming before us presently.

For what is the Church? Is it not the body of Christ? It is the answer produced on earth by the Holy Ghost to the glory of that exalted man and head at the right hand of God. Hence it is that you cannot separate these two. Now, the greater part of the children of God have been entirely unexercised as to this place of glory into which Christ has entered. The consequence is that the Church is unknown. They have ignored His place before God. It is denied; the value of it is unknown; the singular glory and blessedness of a man, exalted as He is in heaven, is just as feebly felt as the misery of man now, were he the greatest of philosophers, poets, statesmen or conquerors, sentenced, doomed, outcast from God on the earth. Even the children of God look on present things as comparatively a scene to enjoy, as that of which we must make the best. Consequently, the very truth of God, and the mercy of God, are used to contribute as much as possible to what may be called earthly ease and joy. What is only a vain search after pleasure is modified, no doubt, in the Christian's case: spiritual thoughts are there. But, still, how few saints comparatively look always on this world as a judged and condemned scene! It had been before God in manifold operations, and in testimonies continually, until all was proved. Then came the Son, the man Christ Jesus. It was, alas! the great struggle, so to speak, between God the Father, who had thus given His Son, and the world, led on by the power of Satan. But God was not ashamed, and would not shrink from what (we may say) was to Himself the infinite trial of giving Him

up, of allowing every indignity and wrong to be done to the One He loved above all; and the Son of God Himself spared Himself no sorrow, no shame, no evil that man could put upon Him. But indeed it was for this He came, and for this it was needful in the ways of God that the world should prove its evil as it had never done before; and so it did. Thus all the evil came out that God might deal with it at one blow; that He might deal with it in a blow of judgment — not on the world, but on His Son; that He might deal with it, therefore, in absolute grace as far as this sinful world was concerned. Thereon all was changed, and instead of its being man turned out of a goodly garden of delight, adrift in what became a desert and godless world, man now, in the person of Jesus, enters heaven itself, and sits down on the throne of God and glory.

But the moment God accomplished this, for which He was waiting, then, and not before, there could be the formation of a body on the earth; for there must first be an adequate head; and there was but one person that was adequate to be the head, and that blessed One could not be head till He was man as well as God, and, more than that, till sin had been judged, and grace in consequence could have its full way. And, therefore, we see how blessedly all truth centres in Christ, and in His cross, and in that place into which He has gone at the right hand of God. Besides, there was another thing necessary; there was a suitable competent power needed on the earth. And what power could this be? The same that had always wrought in order to effectuate anything from God. It was the Holy Ghost; but acting now in a new way, conformably to that in which God had displayed Himself. He had shown Himself in the Son of God, and He would not retire from it.

There was but one person even in the Godhead that could, as an object and image, display God: it was the Son. It was always so. He who had revealed God, even passingly, was the Son. He might as an angel, so to speak, appear, as in the case of Abraham; still, it was always the Son. But if ever there was a power that wrought, whether in a good man or a bad man, He that wrought divine things by and in man on the earth was invariably the Spirit of God. Hence the Spirit of God takes His place in this new work of God. The Son had entered as man into the glory which He had before as God. He had gone up into the very presence of God, and carried manhood, as it were, in His own person to His throne; so that there was the wondrous sight of all in heaven subjected to a man. Then it was evident what God had in His heart from what God was manifesting above.

But who, I must ask once more, could worthily tell this here below? Who could be a due witness of this heavenly glory? He that knew it perfectly; He that alone was able and willing to glorify Christ, and was wont to give man to do, learn, or enjoy whatever God had before Him for man. It was the Holy Ghost; and He accordingly comes down. And this is the fruit of His coming — He forms one body on earth, not so many bodies. There is no such thought in Scripture. Is there such a notion in the mind of any child of God here? Does He recognize Christian bodies on the earth? What can be more false? I do not mean intellectually so alone. As Christians, we would not waste time or breath on the mere wanderings of the human mind. But I do say that a wrong to Jesus, a wrong to this most blessed manner in which God is glorifying His Son by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, is surely one which ought to act on the conscience, and shock the heart of one to whom God has made known the glory of Christ by the Holy Ghost. Am I, then, in the current of the working of God's Spirit? or am I, on the contrary, traversing God's prime object in sending down the Holy Ghost, and exalting Christ at the right hand of God?

Thus it becomes a question entirely above all ecclesiastical controversy. God forbid that the children of God should occupy themselves with such trifles or worse! But I do say, that if we know Him, if we delight in Him, if we walk no more after the flesh, if, indeed, God has revealed His Son in and to us as He is now risen and glorified, it becomes us to inquire whether we are obedient to the

heavenly vision, as the apostle was in his great measure — we in our little one- — whether we are imitators of him as he was of Christ. Does not God call all His children to be instruments of divine grace for His purpose of glorifying the Lord Jesus? This must always begin with oneself: just as with the apostle Paul, the truth sunk deeply into his own soul before the mighty work opened out all around him. But whether it be in ourselves (which, of course, is the first true effect of the revelation of Christ to us), or also in the desire to be helpers of the joy of others, as servants of God's will in magnifying the grace of Christ, it does become us to search and see whether we can answer with a pure conscience.

Now, what Paul was given to see, and what he has brought out fully in the chapter from which I have read a verse, is, that the Holy Ghost is now come down to work on earth in the Church — not merely in the saints individually (though surely this also). But there is here below that which God calls His Church, the body of Christ, and here identified with Christ. So true is this, that the Spirit does not disdain to call the whole (that is, Christ and the Church) Christ Himself: thus thoroughly do the saints form a part of His glory. And this comes out in a very interesting manner, — humiliating indeed to us, but a wondrous proof of the God with whom we have to do. It was the folly, and vanity, and workings of other evil among the Corinthian saints, which formed the occasion for the Spirit to instruct us thus largely about the Church, the body of Christ. Their painful disorder called forth the application of God's mind and will, — their vain-glory too, that loved to display whatever of power they had. And there was power; for it was no question of weakness. Many suppose that the great reason why there is or may be disorder in the Church of God is because of weakness; but weakness never ought thus to work. Disorder has nothing to do with weakness. In fact, some of those who have caused the greatest disorder in the Church have betrayed not so much weakness as strong flesh. There is always insubjection to Christ, and very often the same vanity that was displayed in the Corinthian saints. No one can fairly impute it to lack of power there. It was the abuse of power, the ostentatious desire of showing what they possessed — in few words, the severance of the power of the Spirit from the glorifying of Christ. Disorder is the natural result. It matters not whether it be little or more power, nor what the qualities possessed may be; if severed from Christ, it is fatal, — fatal to His glory, fatal to the blessing of saints and other souls, — most of all, fatal to him who is so misled of Satan. This was precisely what was at work in Corinth at that time. How ought we not to bless God for the use to which He has turned it in His mercy!

I can say but few words, compared with the demands of my subject to-night. Let me just call attention to some of the leading points of the chapter as they occur. "I would not have you to be ignorant concerning these spiritual things" — these manifestations. "Ye know that when ye were Gentiles ye were* carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed." So such man calls Jesus "Anathema;" no one puts Him under the curse (but on the cross). God, we know, did it, when He died for our sins; but no man calls Jesus Himself accursed by the Spirit of God. Nor can one say that Jesus is Lord, but through the Holy Ghost.

* Such is the meaning of the true text,

Thus, there are two powers at issue in view of God and man. There is the spirit that works in the children of disobedience; there is the Holy Ghost that works in the children of God. In the one case there is the expression of the rising up of man against Jesus; in the other there is the subjection of believers to the Lord (for this is the great point pressed here — Jesus as Lord). The reason was because these Corinthians were practically making the Lord's Supper their own supper, and the assembly their own theatre of display, as if the word went out *from* them, instead of coming *to* them, with all other Christians, claiming their obedience to God. In fact, the lordship of Jesus needs only to be urged when

souls are in a proud or negligent condition. The saint that enjoys Christ needs no such pressure, would have none other lord, and delights in His grace. Of course, it is always due by every soul; but evidently the assertion of it is most needful where insubordination prevails, and flesh endeavours to exalt itself against His will, as indeed was the case at Corinth. Therefore the apostle starts with this grave fact, that the Church of God is where the Holy Ghost maintains Jesus as Lord. This is the prefatory principle, meeting the Corinthians exactly in their need, as the Spirit of God must do, if one may so say. God deals, if at all, morally; nothing else would be worthy of Him or good for us. God deals morally, though He would carry our hearts into the enjoyment of Himself, where all thought of our ways may be dropped: yet is there nothing, after all, which acts so powerfully on our ways to form them according to His nature.

The next thing noticed is that "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit;" and again, "There are differences of administration, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." It is clear that these three verses are of deep importance for our practical understanding of that which the Lord lays down. The simplest elements are here; yet the Church has practically forgotten them. They are the smallest requirements that He could accept of, the only recognizable character of God's assembly, viewed in its working day by day.

First of these, then, "diversities of gifts" are spoken of. Wherever anything assumes to answer to His Church on earth, there must be free room, not only for gifts, but for diversities of gifts, in the same congregation. Where the gifts are practically shut out, and the congregation really look to one or more individuals only, no matter how gifted, the ground is proved by the first touch of God's word to be not of Himself. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit (not minister). I do not mean by this that there should be an effort to give the semblance of many gifts at work. The Church of God is a real body; and now we must add that its state is distressingly anomalous; but seeking appearances, which would always have been unseemly, is now especially to be deprecated. It is His assembly: we must take care what we do or seek there. He formed it here for the Lord's glory through the Holy Spirit, who is sovereign and will surely maintain the rights of Christ. Be the manifestation great or small, it is the fruit of His own working; but assuredly there are diversities of gifts. In fact, especially as the assembly now is, there might be few — perhaps none in a particular place, or only one or two might manifest gifts to edification; elsewhere there might be many. The great point is that the door be open for all He gives.

I repeat that "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." Whatever denies this practically, or in principle, is not God's Church, and has no claim therefore on my allegiance or yours. Yea, I am bound to disown its pretensions. Ought I to sanction or to abjure a departure from the Lord's will in these grave matters of the Holy Ghost? Ought I not to treat a congregation of real Christians as a human association, if they fling overboard, e.g. such a word as this? It is no question merely about the constituents, but of that which regulates their action. If human rules, different from Scripture, and even opposed, govern, is it not man's Church? What has a Christian to do with any but God's Church? Who licensed man to meddle? Who called him to regulate it? To make the Church was a great work even for God Himself. It needed the Son to go to heaven after redemption was wrought, and the Holy Ghost to come down to the earth for the purpose. The world He made by His word for the first Adam, though in ultimate purpose, no doubt, for Christ, when He shall be displayed as King in His glory. But even God Himself did not (and I think we may say with reverence, could not) make the Church until He had the Second Man its glorified Head above, and the Holy Ghost sent down to form the body below. Death and resurrection alone could be an adequate basis; the risen ascended Lord Jesus alone the suited head. Thus God's Church on earth is not a governmental provision of religion for a nation, nor a society

framed to hold and carry out the plans and peculiar views of the best of men. It is the body which the Holy Ghost has formed here below for Christ, whom in its very first principle it confesses as Lord. But the manner of the practical working is in diversities of gifts, though the same Spirit.

Next, as we are told, "there are differences of administration, but the same Lord." That is, the Lord employs one for one thing, and another for another; but it is He who acts in this. The Spirit of God does not take here the place of Lord, and I doubt very much indeed that this is a true way of looking at the Spirit of God. Is it correct to speak of the rule of the Spirit? I admit most entirely the power, and working, and sovereignty of the Spirit; and I suppose that this last is what is meant by sound men when they speak of His rule. Still there is a danger of slipping out of that form of sound words which the Scriptures supply — not the letter, but the truth and principle of God's word. I am not contending about shadows, but about realities; and I am sure we shall find the words of Scripture most aptly express the truths of Scripture. Hence, when we slip away from words, we are in danger of weakening the truth itself. Again, there has been a tendency more than once in the Church of God to set up the Holy Ghost, as it were, in the place of the Lord. The effect of this is, that it takes us out of the place of subjection to the Lord as He is above. Now, inasmuch as the Holy Ghost works in and by man, this, more or less, tends to put man in the place of Christ Himself: Whereas, if we hold to that which Scripture says and teaches, it is plain that the Holy Ghost Himself, in the working of the Church, takes not so much the place of Head and Lord as of Servant, caring for all and glorifying Christ, though He be divine. As the Son here below took the place of Servant of the Father for the divine purposes, so the Holy Ghost, although He be in His own person God, and therefore supreme, nevertheless deigns, for the carrying out of God's counsels, meanwhile to subject Himself to the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus it is that He stamps the servant character as it were, on the saint who is really animated by Him and led by Him to the glory of Christ. That is, the Spirit constitutes him, in relation to the Lord Jesus, a servant, even though his function may be ruling the Church of God. To do so is not pride, but just the true place of a servant who is called to rule; he cannot faithfully give up that will of his Master, nor need there be a particle of self in thus ruling. Where self or man is the disposer, what value, authority, or power can there be? But if a man be called to rule in any way, let the sphere be little or great, he is as much a servant, nay, he is only a real servant, if he carry out that which the Lord has given him to do. There is no assertion of self here, but of Christ Himself, in thus serving Him, whatever his place or gift. There are differences of administration, but the same Lord, even as there is the same Spirit and diversities of gifts.

Again, "there are diversities of operations," he adds; "but it is the same God which worketh all in all." The Church is not a place where man has the smallest title, or where there is any room for his will. If God is working there, it is man's place to retire, that God may really work according to His own will. What a character this gives the Church of God! And I just pause for a moment to press this upon those present, not on those to whom it may be altogether an untried thing in experience, or even comparatively new. I would ask the brethren and sisters here before me, Are these the truths that really fill our hearts? When we enter, say, on each Lord's day, when we come together on any occasion for edification or worship, do we meet as God's assembly, looking to the Spirit, the Lord God Himself? Thus I press that it is either God's assembly or nothing I am aware there are those who think it presumptuous to call themselves God's assembly. Pray, what would you have them to be called? Would you like it to be "man's assembly," or no assembly at all? Would you like to break up all responsibility of the saints of God on the earth? Could you bear calmly that Jesus should have no glory by you, however poorly reflected it may be? — that He should have no return of our hearts to His grace; that the Holy Ghost should be thwarted, hindered, supplanted, now that He is pleased to have come down to glorify Christ in the saints? Yea, after He has once more aroused the children of God, and they have

come out from their places of hiding and slumbering, refusing to be diverted any longer from going forth to meet the Bridegroom? And if they go forth, must they not give themselves up to do His will? and how do it better than in that which is dear to Him? There is an object incomparably dearer to Him than all that engrosses men around. What can all worlds be to Him, compared with the love which He bears to His bride, the Church, which is His body here below? Will this lower His glory in our eyes? will this enfeeble our desire to obey, because we realize in ourselves that our place is to do His will, subject to that which lies upon us for glorifying Christ? Far from us be such a thought.

Let me just put it thus. Take, for instance, a wife. Supposing she has a wife's feelings, loving and right thoughts of her husband, and he is one that is not only a husband in name, but worthy of all her love. I need not say how any such comparison fails, when we think of Christ and the Church. But, still, they resemble enough to raise the question, whether nearness of relationship weakens love for an altogether worthy object? To ask such a question is to have it answered at once. How grievous that such delusions should be tolerated for a moment by children of God!

It is a lie of Satan, that to know God as our Father in Christ is to weaken our obedience; so is it to deny the title of Christ's members, wherever they may be. Is it not plain, that to recognize them as His draws out mutual love, and gives perseverance and confidence in seeking to serve them? Deny their place of relationship, and with what different feelings you must deal with them! On what ground would you ask them to abandon the ways and the systems of man? Why, save on this basis, would you urge the blessedness of meeting on[y] in Christ's name on earth, before we go to heaven, as part of that which God has called His Church? How utterly repulsive to the Christian, that the world which is stained with the blood- guiltiness of Christ's cross should presume to meddle with the body and bride of Christ! How nauseous to sink into a voluntary society, a sect framed and governed according to rules of man's device! If this be so, it is the plain responsibility of every child of God to cleave only to what God has done and revealed, not doubting the power and willingness of the Spirit to make him faithful.

But there is another truth, too, connected with this. I have already shown, on a former occasion, the real and abiding presence of God's Spirit on earth. Consequently it is no question of forming a new Church, still less a make-shift. It is our place to recognize what the Spirit has formed and never abandons. It is our calling to act in faith on God's word about it, clearing ourselves from what it condemns, and seeking to be true to what God Himself has given. Only two or three in a place might have faith so to feel and act (for the ruin is very great); but were it only two or three even in a great city like this, met together in the name of the Lord Jesus, even they should allow nothing inconsistent with "diversities of gifts," "diversities of administration," and "diversities of operations," instead of setting up all, so to speak, on the same ground of human equality or the distinctions of self-devised order. God's truth and will can never lose their authority over His people by change of circumstances. Clericalism and religious radicalism are equally and altogether opposed to Scripture and the action of the Holy Ghost. They are different and opposite forms of man's will. The Church is a divine institution, where God's disposal must be supreme; and this the Holy Ghost alone can make good according to the written word. All else is only man; and it matters little whether it be man the leveller or man the exalter of his fellows, — either is only man. Who but God has any real claim to deal with His Church? If it be only "our church" or "your church," we or you, I grant, may lawfully alter or amend, narrow or widen it, as we think proper.

But were there only two or three saints who, because of the word and Spirit of God, because of the injured rights of the Lord Jesus, came out from that which has so long departed from the Scriptures about God's assembly, and set at nought the Holy Ghost, I am bound to own them as on the true ground of God's Church. Lowliness becomes them as well as deep thankfulness; shame that they too should

have joined in the general slight put on God's word and Spirit, desire for the blessing of all saints according to God's will, and a holy fear lest their own weakness or negligence should bring dispute on their testimony. I do not mean, nor do I say, that such are *the* Church of God; but I do call them, thus walking together, His Church. Were they the only two or three saints in the whole world that were so met according to the word, they would be the only thing of that nature here below. Thus it is not the simple fact of being members of Christ's body that constitutes the Church. No doubt this is the personal title, and all Christians are members of Him, and this constitutes their responsibility to abandon everything that falsifies their relationship in conduct, position, and objects; but what constitutes God's Church here below is not that the individuals composing it are members of Christ — though that, of course, is essential — but that they assemble and walk together according to the word of God, the Holy Ghost being allowed His own place of sovereign action for the glory of the Lord Jesus. It is only a circumstance whether they be two or three, or as many hundreds, thousands, or millions. The number of those who gather is a wholly subordinate point.

Again, though real members of Christ are contemplated, this alone does not at all suffice. Thus there might be ever so many saints associated; but if they arranged themselves or their meetings as they saw fit, apart from Scripture, received such or such according to their wisdom, carried out their discipline, owned this doctrine and not that, what would this be? A more or less excellent, prudent, energetic society of Christians. Yet not merely all these things, but any of them, being opposed to the word of God and the place of the Holy Ghost acting in the Church — still more, all of them united — would destroy the pretension to be God's Church. They would have no real claim on God's children outside of them. Not the smallest recognition is due corporately, though they would still be individually objects of love as Christians. None ought to deny their proper place and relationship, which is indeed the true ground of appeal to their consciences. The Church viewed as on earth is the assembly of saints, where God acts by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; it is His assembly, and not merely an assembly of saints. Of course, an assembly of saints is so far well; but if only this, it can never aspire with truth to the place of God's Church. It is not theirs but His presence by the Holy Ghost which constitutes them His Church. How precious that there should be on earth saints built together for God's habitation in the Spirit!

But as with Christ the Son in the days of His flesh, so now the Holy Ghost is not allowed His place. What a thought to utter! and yet, is it not true and certain that the state of Christendom now warrants the use of such words as "not allowed His place"? Can you say that God has the full freedom of acting according to His own word? The responsibility of this has been left to man; and how has he discharged it? It is truly wonderful that just as God allowed man to do what he pleased with Christ, so He allows man to show despite to the Spirit of grace, for the present thwarting and defeating His glory in the Church. Both the one and the other were committed to the responsibility of man. We know the day is coming when the Church shall disappear from the world to join its Head, and enter into its destined seat of glory along with Christ. Before the world, too, we shall shine in due season.

But what I press as the point of solemn consequence for God's people to feel now is this, how far they have received into their soul, and how far they are really carrying out the truth of God as regards His Church. If you say you have no particular care about it, and it is enough for you to think of your soul's salvation, I must ask you, Where is your heart for Christ and those who are Christ's, and for His glory in them? What a grovelling and selfish place for a Christian to put himself in! It is, I admit, a natural result of the teaching that prevails, which ignores the one body and one Spirit for our own salvation and that of others. And it bears with itself its, retributive sting; for those who accept such a scheme never seem to attain even that selfish end; they are doomed to continual uncertainty as to their

personal acceptance with God, and find a relief in worldliness from their lack of settled peace. What a contrast with God's way, who saves with a perfect salvation, that we may be free for all His objects, for His glory in Christ and the Church above all! Believer, has God saved you to leave you apart from His own purposes, and without a care for the glory of Christ? If God has shown you such infinite mercy, does not His word, does not your heart under the Spirit's leading, point to your owning and serving Christ, learning and doing the will of God about that which is so dear to Christ as the Church? I beseech you to consider the matter.

But in this chapter (1 Cor. 12) there is far more than I have noticed. The apostle speaks of the manifestation of the Spirit in various forms. It is given to every man, not for himself, but to profit withal. "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues." Thus the chapter embraces those gifts that went out as a sign to the world. They were in the Church, in the various members of the body of Christ; but still, it was not the profit of the Church only: there was an outward mark to men also. Take, for instance, the tongues What a witness of the considerate grace of God! What a witness of the love that no longer confined itself to the chosen nation, but would meet men now in grace where they had been placed already by His judgment after the flood! The wonderful works of God in redemption are proclaimed by the Spirit to every nation under heaven in their familiar tongues. But we have more than this. "All these," it is added, "worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." Thus carefully is maintained the sovereign action of the Holy Ghost. Whatever may be the place of servant which He is pleased now to assume, still He is sovereign, acting as He will; He is divine, He is God. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: also so is Christ." Have you been brought to God? Have you believed in your heart, and confessed with your mouth, that God has raised Jesus from the dead? Then you are His to magnify Him who is your Saviour and Lord. Own Him only as the Lord; own the Holy Ghost as the one that is actively working in the saints, in God's assembly here below. This I admit, that the Spirit of God, freely acting in grace, does not confine Himself to the assembly as such; He may act in, and does act by, members of Christ (and even others betimes), though they themselves may not be faithful, nor in the place where God would have them be. Hence I do not deny for a moment that the Holy Ghost works in both nationalism and dissent, and not in Protestantism only, but in Popery and the Eastern systems of Christendom. But he who values and understands Scripture must see that all this conflict of Christian societies proves total departure from God's word as to His Church.

Thus national Protestantism is not only an invention of man, but comparatively modern. Nothing of the sort existed for at least fifteen centuries after the Church was formed. But go on. Let us look not merely at national bodies, but where it is attempted to gather saints, on the basis of (let us suppose) a large measure of truth: Is this God's Church? Does the Church select particular doctrines? Does it choose its own ministers in the word? When the Church takes such a place, it quits subjection to the Lord in principle. It is the wife attempting to play the husband, instead of obeying him. Nothing can be simpler, if we hold fast what God Himself has laid down. The Church does not confer mission, does not teach; but I admit entirely that it is bound to judge, and not only in matters of moral evil, but also in doctrine, intolerant of all which overthrows the holiness or the truth of God, and especially careful of Christ's glory. But this is very different from commissioning a clergy, or defining articles of faith. Looking at the Church in Scripture, I see it charged with the obligation of maintaining the truth, the pillar and ground of it here below. I do not look abroad into the world to find the truth; I know that the truth is found nowhere except in the Church I am speaking of the Church ordered under apostolic care

as it was. Its responsibility is not lost by its disorder.

Now indeed there is a state of things that painfully contrasts with what is presented in the word of God. We see a number of bodies which call themselves this kind of church and that. What is a child of God to do who desires to be humble yet faithful to God? Judge where you are by the word of God, judge by it what you are doing and what you are sanctioning by your assent or even presence. Have you given up the fellowship of saints on earth? Do you hide behind the plea that you have nothing to do with others — that all your duty is to walk well yourself? Then you abandon the ground of God's Church wholly. Be honest. Search and see, whether you find yourself outside the bearing of the Scriptures that treat of God's assembly in its practical working, or whether they tally with what you are doing. Is not the Holy Ghost so fettered by arrangements of men that the diversities of gifts, were they ever so many and real, have no room to display themselves? Is not the Spirit grieved by the counteraction? Is not the Lord practically displaced by the Church (no matter of what sort) presuming to appoint overseers, and even ministers of the word, instead of His servants going forth on His own warrant, and trading with His goods? Somehow or other you have got outside that which answers to the written word; you are off the ground of God's Church on earth.

On the other hand, if faith emboldens you to be with only two or three, where there is the joy of knowing that the word really applies and directs, instead of pronouncing condemnation, how blessed it is and proves! For them that honour God, He will honour in due time. Meanwhile divine light shines on the path every time you meet together. It may show how feeble you are, and how you fall short; still it is the right place and aim; it is where God wills you to be, and graciously cares for you, supplies need, sends helps by the way, gives now this servant, now that; for "all things are yours," and your soul profits by the truth, and advances in the ways of God. If there be evil here or there, it is detected and judged (the Holy Ghost working through the word to that end). Then how sweet to know that we are doing in deed and in truth the will of God! He that does it shall abide for ever. How happy the heart and conscience that thus has the certainty of subjection to the Lord Jesus through the dreary way!

Now, this was what the apostle desired for the Corinthians. They had practically got the whole machinery into disorder, but he does not deny that it was God's assembly. There may be brought in any imaginable evil under the sun. Am I to turn my back upon the assembly of God because of things unworthy, which I might hear of in one or another? Surely this is not the path of the Lord, who tells us how evils are to be judged and corrected, What we have to do, then, is to apply the word intelligently, and deal with each source of scandal as it may arise. Of course, indifference as to the will of the Lord is evil, no less than the evils I feel in others; but it is as unscriptural to go out at once because of another's sin, as to wink at it or help it on. God's assembly is and must be intolerant of evil, because He is confessed to be there; but I must seek to arouse conscience, and to act in obedience even as to this. In the Church (not rushing out of it hastily) I can count upon God working in and by His saints; and therefore, no matter what evil Satan may foist in, false doctrine or immorality of the most flagrant kind, we are neither to be overmuch surprised nor to refuse our aid to the Church, whose business is to do the Lord's will about all. I am to look to Him, and call upon Him, and count upon Him, and with my brethren too, that all our consciences may be in activity — men, women, and children — and we may have grace to cast out that which is offensive to God's glory, if nothing less can remedy the mischief.

Thus, it is not the fact of weakness, nor even the entrance of positive sin, no matter of what sort it may be, which should lead us to separate, however great the shame and sorrow to the heart. It is the refusal to deal with the unclean thing; it is the practical rejection of the Spirit of God, rising up by the word and rebuking the evil, which is so fatal. It is where the plain self-will of man prevails and is sanctioned, preferring ease, quiet, and the appearance of unity, though all that makes unity precious be

gone; for what have we to do with unity, if it be not formed and sustained according to the will of God? If it be not that which the Holy Ghost puts His seal upon, if it be not for the maintenance of the glory of the Lord Jesus, it is a horror and a sin, and has no claim on my allegiance. And therefore nothing can be simpler, after all, than the application of these principles, though unbelief loudly cries that there is no hope, and that we are delivered to do these abominations. There are difficulties found in the path of Christ; but faith overcomes. We know that the Church is composed of men who, though in the Spirit, have nevertheless the flesh in them. Consequently there are seeds of evil which Satan will endeavour to cause to germinate, and shed their effects around, as banefully and antagonistically for the glory of God as he can. With the Lord in our midst, we are not to be alarmed at anything: still less are we to flee from that which is a post of honour and blessing, as truly as of difficulty and danger. Let us gird up our loins, and look to Him whose the Church is, and whose is all power and might. He will manifest His gracious power on our behalf, and deal with what is hateful to Himself.

But what if subtle evil, especially against Christ (for this is Satan's aim), gain the upper hand in the assembly — what if remedy or judgment be refused — what if, for any reason of its own, the Church reject as uncalled for, unlawful and presumptuous, the attempt to call attention to the sentence which God's word pronounces on what is certainly opposed to His glory, and destructive of truth and holiness? Evidently there we find ourselves, if it be so, on slippery ground. But if the evil, flagrant as well as certain, be hid and kept up, not judged, and that which took the place of God's assembly shuts itself up in deliberate self-will and rejection of the calls of the Holy Ghost to judge what is contrary to Christ, then we must go out in the Lord's name, sorrowfully, it may well be, and with deep shame, and with feelings that ought indeed to leave us a heart wounded and bleeding and broken before such grievous evil, but at the same time with no hesitation of spirit, if we see without doubt the signs and tokens of the very same evils which broke better hearts than ours before us. I cannot but repeat that solemnly, in the strength of the Lord, we are to turn our backs upon that which is so much the viler a pretender, because, having had the light of God anew, it deliberately refused to act on it; because, having had the grace of God afresh brought out, it is become obstinately deaf to His word, and turns His mercy into licentiousness against Him. May the Lord deliver us from such ways, and make us always sensitive to His glory and revealed will; but, at the same time, first of all, ready to think ourselves mistaken, and unwilling to believe that His assembly could basely betray His honour thus, never acting in an individual case, still less with an assembly, until we are forced to know the sad and humbling certainty that the saint or the assembly is utterly faithless to Christ. Haste either to put away individuals, or to judge that which has been owned as an assembly of God, is the last thing that ought to characterize the child of God. Slow and painful should be such a discovery to us, which we cannot refuse, because God, as it were, lays it on our consciences, and then we may not close our eyes or decline to act firmly. This, I trust, may help some to notice the working of God's Spirit, not only as revealed in the word, but as He would have it truthfully applied to deal practically with present duties and difficulties.

And now a few words just to call attention to the great truth contained in verse 13, which was read, that "we, being many, are one body." The Scriptures go further, and say, "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free." Who can doubt that every child of God now, every one that is called by God's grace since the cross, is brought into the membership of this body? Not one Christian is left out. I do not say that all saints enter at once; but that there is not a single Christian who is not, sooner or later, baptized by the Holy Ghost; and if baptized by the Holy Ghost, unto what end? Not to be split into individualities. This was the state of saints in Israel of old, but is the very thing the Holy Ghost is sent to take one out of. I do not, of course, lose my blessing as an individual under Christianity — the very reverse; but, besides, there is a ground which

God has given us corporately here below. I belong to the one body, the Church. I am baptized into that one body by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. This is as much a matter of faith as that I am a child of God. But if I am a member of the one body, am I acting as such? Do I believe that it holds good now? Does it not depend on the unfailing presence of the Holy Ghost? If it be real now, is it not incumbent on me to walk accordingly? And how? Search and see by the word of God; try your ways; and I have no doubt what will be the result to him who does so honestly — I do not mean in human frankness, but in godly sincerity, and with that single eye which seeks not its own things, but the things of Jesus Christ. Is it possible that there should be any but one result for all the children of God who are guided by His word and Spirit? There is no defect in Scripture, no failure in the Holy Ghost.

I am aware that many will suppose that this is a bold insinuation, but I dare say nothing less or otherwise. I should feel in doing so that I was slighting the word of God, or practically denying the power of the Holy Ghost. It would be the unbelieving admission that God's revelation and present guidance are insufficient. This seems to me truly a bold insinuation, which for my part I utterly refuse. Is not God's Spirit in us greater than he that is in the world? I dare not allow that Scripture is the nose of wax which some papists and all infidels pretend. And I affirm that the Christian, though having the flesh in him, is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, inasmuch as the Spirit of God dwells in him. Were we simple and subject to Scripture, the Holy Ghost could and would produce but one conviction. The only reason why Christians differ so widely is because unjudged flesh prevails against the Spirit. I mean nothing against other men; I say this against myself as surely, and, I trust, with as deep a meaning, as against anyone who allows the flesh to have its way. I feel that one cannot, ought not to, give up either the assurance of the Spirit's presence, or the sufficiency of God's word, when wielded by the Holy Ghost. Is not the Holy Ghost here, to use mightily that word for the glory of Christ in the Christian and the Church, in proportion to faith? Therefore, what becomes the child of God is to put aside all the rubbish of tradition, and the dead weight of unbelief he knows, to quit that which he does or allows, or is in any way connected with, that contradicts Scripture, and makes it impossible for him thoroughly, and in all things, to carry out the word of God in the Spirit.

The rest of the chapter, on which I need not enlarge, teaches, first of all, that the body is not one member. The variety of the members indicates how necessary all are — a most important principle — the foot just as much as the hand. Not, of course, that all are necessary for the same end, nor that all have the same place or function; nevertheless they are all needful, great and small. In the present weakness and distraction of the Church of God, the hand may be there and the foot may be here — scattered instead of being gathered. Things are in a dislocated condition, as far as regards the outward manifestation of the body of Christ on the earth. Confusion and perplexity reign as the effects of this; but God is always faithful, and still works by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, who is sufficient for all circumstances. The Church may be weak, and ministry may be no stronger; but is the Spirit of God weak? Thus it comes to be simply a question of our faith in the reality of the presence and the operation of the Holy Ghost. And He empowers and employs individuals as He wills for the glory of Christ, but normally as members of His body; and it is of great importance that there should be firmness in holding fast this truth, without forcing others beyond their faith. But what can be more lovely on earth than this hearty falling in with the various workings of the Spirit of God! He distributes a gift to one which characteristically differs from another's. There are not, and never were two gifts exactly alike in the Church of God. Not more truly does each man differ from his neighbour; and, as we all know, there is something that is special to every man. The likeness may be strong, but there is that which stamps one man which nobody else has or ever had. It is exactly so in the Church; God needs this or that for the work He has given us to do. Flesh envies and is jealous; but how sweet where the Spirit of God gives us faith to recognize these varieties in the work of the Lord! On the other hand

nature, wherever it is allowed, invariably obliterates these divine traits; assimilates as much as possible by some grinding process, so to speak, and thus injures the fine lineaments and diverse workings of God's Spirit. However, the details of the chapter must be passed over. I have only desired to present, as far as I could in brief, its leading thoughts.

There is another Scripture to which I must advert before closing — Ephesians 4. There again the body of Christ is prominent, but in a strikingly different way; because the apostle looks at His body, the Church, not as the scene of the Holy Ghost's operation on earth (1 Cor. 12), but as linked up with its Head in heaven. So far is Christ from being described there as the Head, though, of course, it was true, that the body on earth is itself called "Christ." (Verse 12.) Instead of uniting in that way Christ and the Church, looking at all as a field where the Holy Ghost carries out the will of God, here it is another aspect. Christ Himself is ascended up on high, and the body of Christ, though of course as to fact here below, yet as to relationship is viewed as one with Christ above. If I look at Christ, therefore, I am at once connected with heaven; if I look at the Holy Ghost, I am connected with earth as the place where He Himself is at work for God's glory in the Church. Hence this difference runs through these epistles. Both views are true and important. The one is not to be abandoned or neglected more than the other. I do not say that they act equally on the affections; surely this is not so; but they are both needful, both divine, and both revealed for our profit and blessing. Thus what we find as the prominent topic in Ephesians 4 is Christ the infallible source of supply to His body. He gave gifts to it — apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers; but not a word about tongues, or healings — the signs, of which we have so copious an account in 1 Corinthians 12, 14. In Ephesians all was directly the means of nourishment to the body, and viewed as flowing from the care of Christ for His own, rather than a testimony in God's Church of power to the world. There the Spirit works mightily in what is called Christ; here Christ, as Head, personally loves and cares for His body. Hence, too, Christ is as prominent in the one case, as the Holy Ghost is the great energy in the other, working as He will in these various manifestations that are given to each in the Church. Hence, accordingly, in Ephesians, the great object is "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

The right and due manner, in which God intended these gifts should be displayed, is as members of Christ's body. So in 1 Cor. 12, it is not independently of the Church of God, but as a member of the one body. It is true even of evangelizing, were it the apostle Paul himself, however miraculously the Lord had wrought in his call, as the Spirit did afterwards. When Saul and Barnabas went forth, it was as recommended by the Church to the grace of God. So they come back and tell the Church what God had wrought. It was in no way as having derived their commission from the church which is not competent to choose or send forth the Lord's servant. This is of importance. We have only to compare it with the source, call, and character of ministry as seen in the present day, and the difference is as glaring as complete between ministry according to God, and when corrupted by man. I do not deny that there are servants of the Lord amongst ordinary official ministers; but, at the same time, there is that which always and systematically dishonours the Lord as the sole source of mission, as well as hinders the work; so that, far from being in regular order, you could hardly find anything more anomalous here below. There are, I believe, true and sincere servants of Christ among them; but then, in order to enjoy an official place at the present time in Christendom, you must submit to have your call from some church (so-called); that is, you must in effect be a party to the Lord's disparagement, and honour the church in its place of usurpation, in order to get a ministerial commission. It is not a question of any one body: all agree in this guilty substitution of the church for the Lord. It matters not if it be the smallest branch of religionists: they are as stringent in their form of the error as the Pope of Rome is in his. It is all the same principle, from the Roman Catholic body down to the extravagant sect of Irvingites. There is not a single exception, so far as I know, not even the Society of Friends. Although

in a certain way there is a recognition of the Holy Spirit, yet, as was noticed on a former occasion, there is no body more a stranger to revealed truth on this subject than that society.

I wish to hurt nobody's feelings, but to speak the truth. Nor am I aware of any "Friend" now present: if there be one, I hope he will bear with me in what I must speak out as my testimony to the truth. Now I believe that the doctrine that every man in the world as such has the Spirit of God is as utterly destructive of the great truth that the Holy Ghost dwells in the Christian and in the house of God as anything can be. I know nothing worse — no, not even in Popery, because Popery does after a fashion bring in the name of Christ. It may be only with a few drops of water; but still there is even in their fanatical and intensely superstitious abuse of ceremonies, some sort of sense that man in nature outside the Church is lost, and that under the name of Christ alone can men be saved. So far there is that which redeems Popery itself from the slight put on objective truth found among the otherwise respectable persons alluded to. I have nothing to say against them individually, but I have everything to insist against their opposition to the true grace of God in redemption, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Who can justly deny that this is a solemn charge if true?

God forbid that anyone here should use for self-complacency the fact of returning to this great truth. On the contrary, it is our deep responsibility. Further, it is that which ought to make us truly ashamed, to think that we do not present it with such power to the hearts and consciences of others as to overwhelm them with anxiety, lest they should be outside God's own way. I admit that our want of spirituality and devotedness, our worldliness, and all other sorrowful elements, which, either individually or publicly, have been amongst us, are the greatest possible hindrances; for all the power of Satan along with man could not overthrow us for a moment, if there were not want of faith or faithfulness unjudged in ourselves. This is the real danger we have to fear, and be ashamed of before our God. Let us only hold fast the blessed truth which God has given us to witness to, as well as to believe. Slanders from without are powerless, save with those who love what is evil. Let men say what they will, but let us not tremble for a moment so long as our eye is single, and our heart true to Christ Himself, and the Holy Ghost is confided in according to the word.

But, as in Ephesians 4, another fact may be noticed before I have done. These gifts are till we all come to the measure of the stature of Christ's fulness. It is precisely here that much of the difference is seen between Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12. There is no such assurance in speaking about the signs. Thus I learn what ought, to an instructed eye, to account for the fact that signs no longer appear. The Lord never pledged Himself to continue healings, or tongues, or any such externals as were given to the early Church; but the moment you come to what is necessary to edification, to needful ministerial gifts of His grace for the calling in of fresh souls, or the guarding and watching over those that are called, I have divine authority for knowing that these are given "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." All that is for real good in present circumstances abides for the Church of God even to the end.

And now I close this part of the subject, feeling how scantily I have dipped into it; but that I have, at least, directed attention by God's grace to that which will not fail those who have faith in Himself. May we cherish faith in His word, looking to please the Lord.