

CHRISTIANS WORSHIPPING
IN THE
LAST AND PERILOUS TIMES,

"THIS KNOW ALSO, THAT IN THE LAST DAYS PERILOUS
TIMES SHALL COME."—2 TIMOTHY III. 1.

SOUTHAMPTON:
KAINES, OXFORD TERRACE.

WOLVERHAMPTON:
R. TUNLEY, 128, STAFFORD STREET.

LONDON:
GEORGE MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

W. H. BROOM, 34, PATERNOSTER ROW.

CHRISTANS WORSHIPPING

IN THE

LAST AND PERILOUS TIMES.

“THIS KNOW ALSO, THAT IN THE LAST DAYS PERILOUS
TIMES SHALL COME.”—2 TIMOTHY III. 1.

SOUTHAMPTON:
KAINES, OXFORD TERRACE.

WOLVERHAMPTON:
R. TUNLEY, 128, STAFFORD STREET.

LONDON:
GEORGE MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

W. H. BROOM, 34, PATERNOSTER ROW.

CHRISTIANS WORSHIPPING

IN THE

LAST AND PERILOUS TIMES.

THE object of this present paper is to set forth, if it be possible, the way God would have His children assemble to worship Him, according to His own word. The Father seeketh worshippers, and it is only worship in Spirit and in truth which He will accept; and, therefore, it is of great moment that we should ascertain the mind and will of the Father upon this all-important subject: and especially so in a day of such fearful evil, when from the very midst of the professing Church infidelity and blasphemy have arisen. The Holy Scriptures must be our only guide and charter in the consideration of the question proposed, for therein, and therein only, is declared to us the mind of God.

I would desire to feel as it were in some distant land, far away from all denominations and sectional distinctions, which so much abound in this country, though it be a country of open Bibles, where all can read, without let or hindrance, the word of God. The thoughts of man, or to enter into controversy with the systems of men, I hope to avoid; my desire being just simply to take the word of God, and to discover His thoughts and His will on the simple question, "How would He have me to assemble with the rest of the members of His church to worship Him?" In considering this important question, I do not suppose for a moment

that it affects the salvation of the believer in Jesus. That is ever secure in Jesus, who is at the right hand of God. It does however affect, and that in a very serious way, our joy and comfort here; it does affect our growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus and His truth; and, above all, it affects the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us then now, in the simplicity of little children, willing to learn of their father, turn to the word of God, and may the Spirit of the living God be powerfully present to help me rightly to divide the word of truth, that we may understand it, and, above all, bow submissively to His will as therein declared, whatever that will may be, and whatever it may cost us to obey!

Our question then is, How would God have His Church to assemble for worship and praise?

Now in order rightly to understand the subject it will be needful to go back a little, still keeping to the word, and see what the Church of God is, what has been its history, and whether God has made any provision for His children in a day of evil, such as that in which we are now living.

The first mention we have of the Church is in Matthew xvi., where we read that after Peter's noble confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" Jesus said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." This is the first intimation we get of the Church, though His purpose had been hid in Himself from eternity, but it is only in this present dispensation of the grace of God that it has been revealed, and that to Paul. To him the truth as to what the Church is, its standing and blessing in Christ in heavenly places, its relationship to Him, and its

future destiny was declared, and is now, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, set forth for the joy, comfort, and edification of those who are born again, and made members of Christ's body, His flesh, and His bones. It is however very clear that though there were many saved souls from Adam to the days of Jesus, that the Church of God had no existence. The Church is a thing peculiar to this day of grace. We cannot spare space to enter into all the details of the Church of God, but if the reader will carefully, and with much prayer, read the Epistle to the Ephesians he will there find much blessed truth as to what the Church is, her position before God, &c., &c. To help the reader in searching for truth concerning the Church, we here introduce a few points.

1. The Church did not exist in the days of our Lord* Matt. xvi. 13
2. It was known in the mind of God from all eternity Eph. i. 4
2 Thess. ii. 13
Eph. iii. 9
Col. i. 26, 27
1 Cor. ii. 7—9
3. God first revealed the Church to St. Paul Eph. iii. 2—6
4. The first historical notice of it Acts ii.
5. It consists of neither Jew nor Gentile, as such 1 Cor. x. 32
6. It is composed of Jew and Gentile .. Gal. iii. 28
Col. iii. 11
Rom. x. 12
7. It is *united* into *one body* John xvii. 21
John xi. 52
Gal. iii. 28
Eph. ii. 15
Eph. v. 30
Eph. iv. 15, 16
8. The Holy Ghost unites the members into *one body* 1 Cor. xii. 13
Eph. i. 23

* Our Lord did not say, I have built, or am building; but, "I will build my Church."

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| 9. It is the body of Christ | 1 Cor. xii. 12 |
| | Col. i. 18, 24 |
| 10. Christ is the Head of the body | Eph. i. 20—23 |
| | Col. i. 18 |
| | Eph. v. 23 |
| 11. It is the fulness of Christ | Eph. i. 23 |
| | Col. i. 18—24 |
| 12. Its blessings are : | |
| <i>Spiritual</i> ; not carnal | Eph. i. 3 |
| <i>Heavenly</i> , not earthly | Eph. ii. 6 |
| | Col. i. 5 |
| | 1 Peter i. 3, 4 |

Now the first historical account of the church as being in existence, is recorded in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and there we have, perhaps, the happiest scene earth ever witnessed. It was at the very beginning of the Church of God, and it was indeed a very remarkable time of blessing, for "All that believed were together, and had all things common: and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." (Acts ii. 44—47.)

Here, I say, we have the first historical mention of the Church's existence. The believers were formed into the Church on the day of Pentecost by the descent of the Holy Ghost. To this the twelfth chapter of the First of Corinthians agrees, where we read that the Church is composed of individual souls gathered out of the world and united into one body by the Holy Ghost. "By one Spirit are all we baptized into one body." When the Lord Jesus was about to ascend to His God and

our God, to His Father and our Father, He told His disciples to go into Jerusalem and abide there until they were endued with power from on high. They went, and, according to the promise of Jesus, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, while some 120 of them were in an upper room holding a prayer meeting, the Holy Ghost did descend upon them, and they were baptized into *one body*; "for by one Spirit are we all baptized into *one body*." It is but *one* body though many members, and that body is the fulness of the Christ of God—composed of sinners saved by grace. God, by the Holy Spirit, is now forming a body for His Son, and He is doing so by taking sinners out of this world of sin—which is at enmity against God—and by creating them *new creatures* in Christ. Between these sinners thus saved, thus delivered from sin and Satan and eternal wrath, there exists a peculiar and intimate oneness and relationship. They are all members one of another—all forming one body, and that of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are baptized into one body by the Spirit of God. And this is what has been going on ever since the day of Pentecost, the Lord has been adding to the Church daily such as should be saved. He is making up the fulness of the body of Christ, which when completed Christ will come again and take home to glory—to that place which He has prepared for His bride, the Church, whom He loved from eternity, and so loved that He offered Himself for it as a lamb without spot and blemish, a sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savour.

Now it will be said, True, but where is the oneness of the Church of God—the body of Christ—now to be seen? Alas! alas! man has come in

with his plans and arrangements, and, as a matter of course, the manifested unity of the Church is gone, there is none. Everything that man does is more or less mixed with sin, and the consequence is, all he touches he spoils. And now, instead of seeing the Church one, it is all in ruins, and is divided into an endless number of sects and denominations. But yet, in spite of all the failures of man, the Church of God in His sight is but one still. In God's sight and in God's purpose the believers in Jesus form but *one* body. Wherever the members may be, whether they be linked up with this denomination or that—whatever may be the name by which they call themselves, still the Church of God—the body of Christ—is but one before God, though to man it be but a heap of ruin and confusion. And this union is no mere invention of the fancy, it is a glorious reality. The various members of the body are so linked the one with the other that they can be easily discerned by one another. Let two believers meet, and though they had never met before, yet let one mention the name of Jesus and they are strangers no longer. A chord of mutual sympathy is touched, and life answers to life. Some ask, How can you be certain that such a person is a child of God? Well I say this, union of the Holy Ghost is so real and so practical a thing, that it is not very difficult to discern who are Christ's.

Now this one body of Christ—this Church of God—is called a temple built for the habitation of God by the Spirit. God no longer, as He did in the Jewish dispensation, dwells in temples made with hands, but in that temple built up of living stones hewn out of the quarry of this world by the power of the Holy Ghost. Sinners and rebels

are being taken out of the world lying in the wicked one, and God is transforming them into living stones, and He is adding them one by one to this marvellous temple—the Church of the living God, the ground and pillar of the truth—the habitation of God by the Spirit. Thus then we see, that they who believe in Jesus form the *one* body of the Lord Jesus. They are many members but one body.

It has already been observed, that at the first formation of the Church by the descent of the Holy Ghost all who believed were together, assembling in happy fellowship one with the other for worship, praise, and prayer. When Paul preached, and the word was owned to the salvation of souls, they who were saved met together in the same way for worship. For instance, at Corinth, we find that the whole Church came together into one place to remember the Lord Jesus. (1 Cor. xi.) They were not divided as they now are into different sects and denominations, though even at that early time much error was springing up. Parties were forming within the Church, which, however, the Apostle condemns in very strong language as a very serious evil. When, however, they remembered the Lord's death in the breaking of bread, the *whole* Church came together *into one* place. How deeply interesting is this, what power and blessing there must have been, and how clear and decided the testimony.

It will be said, But where do we now see, in any place, the *whole* Church coming together to break bread in the remembrance of the death of Jesus? Nowhere, that I am aware of. It is division upon division, sect upon sect; or rather, sect against sect. There is no place where all the

believers living in that place come together to break bread. The leaven of evil, which our Lord Jesus declared in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew should be put into three measures of meal, was soon introduced into the early Church, and ever since it has been working and working, spreading and spreading, until now we see the whole well nigh leavened. The day has come, when in the very midst of the professing Church those who are in high places fearlessly state their infidel notions, and all the barriers to their progress are broken down, so that now there seems to be unhindered progress to the lie. The Church of God has now got into the world, and the world into it, and instead of the Lord Jesus being the Lord thereof and the Holy Ghost its guide, it is the world, and evil is rampant in its very midst. And this brings us to the question, Has God made any provision in His word for the believer in such a day of evil? Is it any use protesting against the evil and trying to put it away? Shall we try to bring about a reformation? Well, what does God say about it? He tells us clearly that it is all hopeless. Reformation is quite out of the question. Things have got so bad that recovery is now impossible. The leaven has been allowed to work—the leprosy has been allowed to spread in the house so far that now it has got the upper hand. The mystery of iniquity has gone on for so long a time, and has got so firm a hold that we cannot hope for any improvement; but on the contrary, we are, according to the word, to look for things getting worse and worse. Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, and that too in a place where there is a form of godliness, but the power therefore denied. (2 Tim. iii.)

If then this be so, what are those to do whose consciences are alive to all this terrible evil? If there be no hope of pressing out the leaven, if it be no use to take out some of the stones of the house and put in others, what are they, whose hearts and minds are exercised about it, to do? Has our God and Father made no provision for His children in such circumstances? Yes, indeed He has. He well knew that the evil would come, for He had said it would; He knew too that some of His children would be awakened to the evil, and there would be no hope of improving matters, so He in His grace has met their necessity. He has provided for them, so that they might have rest of conscience and joy and comfort in the midst of all the evil of the professing Church. To meet their difficulty the Second Epistle to Timothy was written. The First Epistle was written that Timothy might know how to behave himself in the house of God—the Church of the living God, the ground and pillar of the truth. The Church is there supposed to be going on according to God's mind and will; but the Second Epistle was written that Christians might know what they were to do when the evil prevailed and the house of God became a *great* house. That mystery of iniquity had already begun in the apostle's day. Well then, how deeply interesting should this Second Epistle to Timothy be to the child of God in this day of evil, because in it we get God's provision for those who desire to be true and faithful to Him—for those who sigh and cry for the abominations that are done in the great house, or Christendom.

Read then 2 Timothy ii. "In a *great* house," &c. Has not the Church become such—has not

the Church of God gone into the world and united the world to itself? Does not the Church of God make a friend of the world? Is not the world appealed to continually for help? Is not the world the power that rules and governs the Church? Did not the highest judge in the land declare the other day that the Establishment of this country was "a creature of the state," that it was made, supported, and governed by the state? And is it not so?

Is it not a great house? Surely it is; for every parishioner is a member of the Establishment, and is bound by the law of the land to take the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at least three times every year. What then is a soul anxious and troubled at the evil of, and in, the great house to do? Read 2 Timothy ii. 20, "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour:" now here is the remedy, "if a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call upon God out of a pure heart." How plain, how simple the instruction of our God. Note the order: first, the separation from vessels to dishonour. If a man purge himself from these then he will be fitted for service. Holiness and separation from all evil are first principles with our God. God cannot go on with us nor we with Him so long as we are in association with evil. There is another scripture to the same effect, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness

with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. vi. 14—18.)

Then further, chapter iii. of 2 Timothy shows that this evil will not be lessened at all, but will wax worse and worse, that in the last days perilous times shall come, and then he gives us a list of the prevailing sins of that time; from such, however, the true-hearted child of God is to turn away. "From such turn away." Thus we see God will not give us the least possible encouragement to hope for things getting better. From such the believer is to turn away, and having first of all done this, then he is in a position where he can follow (first) righteousness, (secondly) faith, (thirdly) charity, (fourthly) peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. It is of considerable moment that we notice God's order, and follow it. Holiness becometh God's house for ever. The Spirit of God is the *Holy* Spirit, and He can have no fellowship with unjudged sin. True, there is to be love, yea, it is to abound. But it must not be love which sacrifices holiness. Love and truth ever go together; true love is inseparable from holiness and truth. Love rejoiceth *with* the truth. It is not love to pass over the faults

of a brother. True, divine love will seek to put them away and restore the soul to God.

But to return. We have seen the provision God has made for the soul that is awakened to, and troubled on account of, the sins of Christendom, viz. : he is to be separate, he is to purge himself, he is to turn away from the vessels to dishonour and all evil, and he is to worship with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. And now the question arises, what are they who have come out from the evil to do, what creed are they to follow, to what charter are they to look for guidance? This again is met in the word of God, and in the very same chapter in which we are told to come out from the evil, so that we have not to travel far to find out where we are to look for direction. At the close of that chapter—the third of the Second of Timothy—we are informed that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” (Verses 16, 17.) Thus, at the very moment the believer takes his stand outside the evil he is met with a charter in which is clearly set forth what our God would have him to do. Our God never leaves His children to their own reasonings, He meets them in every difficulty, He provides for them in all their circumstances. The question is easily answered, then, where am I to go for direction? The word of God is our only standard of truth; there we may learn, provided we have teachable spirits, the mind and will of God. God has moreover given us His Spirit to lead us into *all* truth. Thus we have all we require in this time of need.

In obedience therefore to our God we will again turn to the Holy Scriptures, and there ascertain what we are to do provided we purge ourselves from the vessels to dishonour; for it must never be forgotten that God's order is, first cease to do evil, and then learn to do well.

Now in the first place, I would remark, that as the early Christians met together in one place, so should all those who have taken a place of separation from vessels to dishonour in the "great house," assemble in the same way in one place; of course, I need hardly say, that I mean in the town or village in which they are living, provided the town be not too large. In the same way as it was at Jerusalem, where all who believed were together; or at Corinth, where the whole Church came together in one place. The purpose of meeting in one place was because the body of Christ is but one, and therefore all the members of that body should meet together to manifest the unity thereof.

Now it appears from the word of God, that these early Christians had a very clear and definite object before them when they came together. It was not to meet particular persons amongst men, however good and excellent they might be, neither was it to hear sermons, but it was to remember the Lord Jesus and to show forth His death until He came. At Troas (Acts xx. 7), we find that on the first day of the week the disciples met together to break bread and to worship the Father in spirit and in truth; and what a blessed and simple object to bring Christians together, and I would ask, what object could lead the soul out in praise and worship more than that? Let a soul meditate on the death of the Son of God for poor lost sinners, and if without effort there is not a flowing forth of praise

and worship that soul must indeed be in a fearfully low condition.

If then the object be to worship in the remembrance of Jesus in His death, where and what is the true place of worship? Has our God provided for His children a place of worship? The woman of Samaria sounded our Lord upon this very point. She said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father.....but the hour cometh and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." What does this mean? Does Jesus mean to say, that that beautiful temple is to be set aside, and that Holy of holies where God dwelt? Are the true worshippers to seek for a new place of worship? Yes, for that was a fleshly worship; and the hour has come, when God the Father, who is a Spirit, will be worshipped only in spirit. That was an earthly, worldly sanctuary, God will leave that and open a sanctuary in heaven for all true worshippers. He is going to make all in this day of grace, priests unto Himself. He will be no longer approached by one man, and that but once in the year. He will have all priests brought near to Himself, and He will provide a way in which it can be done. This He accomplished when His own Son died on the cross. When Jesus cried "It is finished," and He had given up the ghost, the veil of the earthly temple was rent asunder from the top to the bottom, and the Holy of holies was opened to all believers. The whole Jewish system was

then set aside. Christ was the end of the law, and at His death the earthly tabernacle was closed and the heavenly one opened—a tabernacle which the Lord had pitched and not man. Into that the believer has all boldness to enter, by that new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. What a place for worship! but it is in heaven and we are on earth, how shall we worship up there then? Well, blessed be our God, not only was the veil rent in twain and the holiest of all in heaven opened, but by Christ the believer has free access, nay, is invited to draw near. (Heb. x.) Christ hath once suffered the just for the unjust, what for—to put away sin? Yes, bless the Lord, He has done that by the sacrifice of Himself, but having done that, He can, and does, in the wonders of His love bring us to God. “Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” Yes, they who were afar off are now made nigh to God, yea, brought to God in the person of Jesus. They are quickened together and raised up together with Christ, and by faith made to sit together in Christ Jesus in the heavenly places. Within the veil of the Holy of holies is the place of worship which the Lord has pitched and not man. It is there too in the heavenlies that the believer is blessed with *all spiritual* blessings. Oh! what marvellous and inexpressible grace, that we who were altogether born in sin—dead therein and sold under it and afar off, should now, in so wonderful a way, be brought to God within the veil. Oh! to grace how great a debtor! Oh! for faith to arise from our own grovelling thoughts. Oh! to have done with self. Oh! to reckon ourselves dead with

Christ. Oh! for faith to realize our true position in the heavens as seated there in union with and as members of Christ's body. The Jewish worldly sanctuary has been set aside, not one stone remaineth upon the other, all, all is gone—the glory is gone—the veil is gone—and the temple itself is destroyed. He who is the substance of all the shadows of the Jewish dispensation has come, even Jesus, and therefore all the shadows have passed away. For who would be occupied with a shadow when the substance of the shadow had been reached and embraced? And then consider the enormous price it cost our God to open this place of worship in heaven for the believer. It cost Him nothing less than the giving up the Son of His love to a fearful death, even the death of the cross. But such was His great love for the sinner, that though it needed, in order to save him, that He must sacrifice His own Son, yet He would not spare Him but freely delivered Him up for us all. And such, too, was the abounding love of Jesus that He freely gave Himself up. He emptied Himself of all His eternal glories in heaven, and came to earth a stranger and pilgrim in the world which He had made by the word which He spake, and over which He was the rightful lord and master.

Such then is the place of worship for sinners saved by grace, the Holiest of all in the heavenlies, where the Lord God dwelleth to whom with all godly boldness we have full and free and joyful access. If then we be risen with Christ—if then this is the place where our God and Father would have His children abide: let us seek those things that are above at God's right hand, let us set our affections on things above and not on things on the

earth, for we are dead and our life is hid with Christ in God. Oh, for grace to say from the heart, O God, my heart is fixed—my heart is fixed.

But then it will be said, We must have a place for worship on earth too, if we are to assemble together in one place. True, but where and what sort of place shall it be? Jesus said, “*Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst;*” but shall we not have as grand and as magnificent a place as can be erected? Shall we not bring all the talent to bear upon the subject, and erect as costly and as beautiful a place as can be designed? Important questions, doubtless, especially in a day when so much attention is given to such matters. The temple that Solomon built for God’s dwelling on earth “*must be exceeding magnificent.*” (1 Chron. xxii. 5.) Shall then the places of worship on earth be less beautiful, shall less pains be taken to render them very magnificent? Important question, but let us think a moment before we reply. What will be the effect of our building “*exceeding magnificent*” temples? Will God adopt them, will He be induced to take up His abode in them? He did so in the days of Solomon, will He do so again? No, He will not, for God dwelleth not in temples made with hands. He is now building a Church—a spiritual house for Himself to dwell in made of living stones—sinners saved by grace. Again, the Father is seeking spiritual worshippers whom He brings to Himself, and He expects that they will worship Him in the Holy of holies, which He Himself has opened for us through the rent veil, that is to say, the flesh of His own Son—in the tabernacle which the Lord has pitched and not man. Well then, will not

anything of earthly beauty be in the way—will not the beautiful architecture, the painted windows, the carved wood, serve to the satisfying of the flesh and not of the spirit? Will not such things tend rather to a fleshly worship than a spiritual? Surely there can be but one reply and that in the affirmative. All these things would be very acceptable if the worship was to be one of the flesh and not of the spirit. But as God is a Spirit, and will be worshipped only in spirit and in truth, they must prove only so many hindrances to worship instead of helps. As plain and as simple then as the room is on the earth the better, so that nothing may attract the natural eye, and so that the mind and heart may be in the Holy of holies in communion with the Father and the Son, for truly our fellowship is with the Father and the Son. Oh! we have already too many things to keep our hearts out of communion, without our putting other things in the way. We need a wholly ungrieved Spirit, so that there may be full and free course for Him to lead our souls into the holiest of all, that we might there worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Having thus seen the object for coming together on the first day of the week, viz., to break bread in remembrance of the death of the Lord Jesus and for worship; having seen too the place where the true tabernacle is pitched, and that by the Lord, and not man; it may be happy for us to consider the persons who are present on these blessed occasions when the Church, or rather, when those few who have purged themselves from the vessels to dishonour in the great house, come together to remember Jesus in His death.

In the first place then, God in His character of

Father is present. It is never said to be the Father's table. It is the *Lord's* table. Yet the Father is present, as He who is seeking worshippers, as we have already seen. He is seated with His children, or rather they with Him; "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." We might take the parable of the Prodigal Son as an illustration of the manner in which the Father is present. It will be remembered that the young man of Luke xv. having wasted his goods in riotous living came to himself, and thought of his father's house, of the servants, and how they had abundance and to spare. He said within himself, I will return and go to my father, and will say unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants." No doubt a servant's place in his father's house would have been far better than feeding the swine in a far country, and he would have been content with such a place. It would have been far more than he deserved. He was not worthy of the least of all mercies. He had sown to the flesh, and had, accordingly, reaped corruption. But however much the prodigal would have been content with a hired servant's place in his father's house, it would not satisfy the heart of love which the father had towards his prodigal son. And this is just all the difference. I, a poor sinner, might be satisfied with a very little blessing. I might be content to be delivered from the wrath to come, which would be infinitely more than I deserved, but He, who has an overflowing heart towards me, would not be satisfied. It is so with our God. He has purposes of love and grace towards the

vilest of the vile. He has a heart of super-abounding grace towards them. His purpose is to reveal Himself as a God who is Love, and He will not be satisfied until He has shown out His grace to the very fulness thereof. His eternal purpose is to declare the glory of His grace, and therefore, I say, nothing but the bringing us to Himself and blessing us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, would meet His heart's desires towards His children even in this present day of grace, reserving for another dispensation further and fuller manifestations of His love. So it was in the case of the prodigal son. The father saw him coming when he was yet afar off; he ran to his son, and embraced and kissed him. He called for the best robe wherewith to clothe him. He put shoes on his feet—shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace—so that he should be able to stand securely without any fear or trembling. The ring, a token of unending love, was put on his finger; the fatted calf too is killed; and the father and the prodigal sat down together, and in happy fellowship feasted off the same fatted calf. This I believe is just the place the Father takes at the table of the Lord. He sits with His children, or perhaps I should say, they with Him. The Father has found a resting place in the work of His own Son, and all His joy and delights are in Him. He ever delights in His accomplished redemption, for by Him sin has been put away and God has rest.

But let us for a moment pause and consider; and as we do so, surely praise and worship will flow forth from our grateful and adoring hearts, for who is a God like unto our God, who forgiveth iniquity and transgression and sin? God com-

mendeth His love towards us, and shall we not hearken and consider? He has taken us from the lowest depths of sin and woe and brought us into the closest communion and fellowship with Himself. He has given us to feed upon the same bread as He feeds upon. Jesus is the bread of God—Jesus is our bread too. Jesus is the rest, the joy, and the delight of the Father—Jesus is the rest, the joy, and the delight of the children too. What a place then are the obedient children brought to, and when they come to the table of the Lord to remember Jesus—they may rest in God's rest and joy with Him in His joy. Truly our fellowship is with the Father and His Son.

Then, again, the Lord Jesus Christ has promised, saying, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." It is His own table. He is the Lord of it. It is not the table of any man, or men. It is not the table of the state or the parish, but it is the table of the Lord, and He is the true and rightful president thereof, and no one else, however good, learned, or excellent he may be. Jesus is Lord, and our place is to be in entire subjection to Him as such. Subjection of spirit, soul, and body, becomes all those who are present to remember Jesus, and to show forth His death until He come again. The actings of the flesh are bad enough at any time, but on such an occasion terrible indeed. As the soul of the believer enters into his true place of worship in that tabernacle which the Lord has pitched, he sees Jesus, who for the suffering of death, is crowned with glory and honour. He beholds Jesus as the Lamb slain. God and the Lamb are there.

We see the wounds in His hands, His feet, and His side, and we see Him as the One who by the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God. This is the Spirit's thought before us at the Lord's table—there we remember Him who was slain for us, whom the Lord was pleased to bruise and to put to death—upon whom the Lord has laid the iniquity of us all. As we sit at the table in communion with our God, we look back to the cross, and remember the bitter anguish of soul that Jesus there endured for us. We can, as it were, hear him crying to His God, and saying, "O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee: let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; for my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. I am counted with them that go down into the pit; I am as a man that hath no strength: free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness in the deeps, thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me: thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I am shut up and I cannot come forth. Lord, why castest thou off my soul? Why hidest thou thy face from me? I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off. They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." (Psalm lxxxviii. 1—8, and 14—18.) We can hear

His dying cry, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Yes, I say, we remember Jesus and how He endured the cross and despised the shame; how He suffered and died that He might save His enemies and bring them home to Him who was His God, and now, through His death, is our God, to His Father and our Father. Well, as we thus sit and meditate on this inexpressibly wondrous scene, solemn praise, worship, and adoration issue forth from our hearts in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs unto Him who hath thus loved us and given Himself for us.

Yet again, Jesus is our High Priest by whom we offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. We need a High Priest, for we are but poor failing creatures and all our best doings even those in our holy things are more or less defiled by sin, and therefore our God has most graciously provided for His children a High Priest through whom they shall approach Him. A High Priest who is touched with the feeling of their infirmities, and who can effectually intercede with the Father and so maintain their relationship to Him as Father. Yes, Jesus our High Priest is ever ready to present to the Father, our praises and worship, from which He has first of all separated the dross and impurities which must ever cling to our best acts of service. Jesus is the minister of the sanctuary above, the tabernacle which the Lord has pitched and not man.

Jesus is ours to show us the Father, for none can see or know the Father but as Jesus reveals Him. No man hath seen God at any time but He who is in the bosom of the Father He hath declared Him.

And once more, it must not be forgotten that

Jesus is still to the world the despised and rejected one; and that we, by coming to His table, profess to come to meet Him and to follow Him as such, and that we are ready to bear His reproach. This is most important. And let us appeal, each one of us, to our hearts and consciences, and ask, whether we are indeed true and faithful followers of the meek and lowly Jesus—the despised and rejected One. Are we indeed living in separation from the world; in it, but not of it? Do we know what it is to be reviled and reproached for Jesus' sake? It is given to us in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake. (Phil. i. 29.) Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus *shall* suffer persecution. (2 Tim. iii.) And this word "*shall*" has never been repealed. It is God's "*shall*." And it will be found that it is still in force when God's children are true and faithful in heart and practice to an absent Lord. I dwell upon this point, for I feel that should the Lord tarry long, bitter trial and sorrow will be the experience of those who will live godly in Christ Jesus, for the days are short and increasingly evil and perilous or difficult. Evil men and seducers are waxing worse and worse. The professing Church is fast going over to Popery and infidelity, and the hearts of the people as a whole are being prepared to believe the lie of him who is yet to come, who shall be worshipped sitting in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. During the little while the Lord does tarry let us be true and faithful. O let us never fail to keep His word—never deny His name—but in everything be faithful to Him who loved us and sacrificed Himself for us. Let us do so at all costs. Jesus in His condescending love asks us to follow Him. He says, Give me thine

heart. He asks us to give up vanity, that we might know and follow Him in whom all fulness dwells. And shall we deny Him His heart's desire? Oh! how wonderful that He should have such a desire! He emptied Himself of all His honour, and dignity, and dominion, and glory for us, and that we might share His joy, and glory, and spiritual blessings in fellowship with Himself. He asks us to forsake our vain and foolish things—our earthly joys, all of which are as nothing. And I ask again, Shall we be foolish enough to refuse Him this request, which will bring us into a place of such unspeakable blessing? Oh! then, for more devotedness of heart to Jesus. O for more willing hearts to take up His cross daily and to follow Him. And, O, for more grace day by day, to show forth His virtues, His beauties, His praises, and His glories.

But we have yet another Person present at the table of the Lord, and He is the Holy Ghost. That He should be present, and that in a very practical way, is all important, for there can be no blessing, no worship, without Him. We can know no truth, we cannot see or know Jesus or the Father in any one of their characters except by the Holy Ghost, who is given to the believer expressly that he may be led into all truth, and that he may be guided into fuller acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ. We are wholly and entirely dependent upon the Holy Ghost for all spiritual blessing. We come together to worship the Father with such worship as shall be pleasing to Him, and that He will accept. But before we can thus worship our hearts and minds must be in subjection to the Holy Ghost, for it is He, and He only that can show us Jesus, or take of the things of Jesus and show them to us. It is therefore of the

very last moment that we give full and unhindered course to the Holy Ghost, so that there may be a revelation of the Father and the Son, and that worship and praise might flow out to them in spirit and in truth.

Now the Lord Jesus said, "Where two or three are *gathered* together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." He did not say, Where two or three are met by their own wills, or as a matter of custom or course, no, not so at all; but, where two or three are *gathered* in the name of Jesus, there He would be in the midst. It is of importance that the meaning of the word "gathered" be remembered and laid hold of; for it implies a power outside drawing or gathering the believers together around the name and Person of the Lord Jesus. Well, it is the Holy Ghost who gathers; and it is the joy and privilege, or should be, of these believers to know and realize that when the first day of the week comes—that when they leave their houses they are not going to the table of the Lord by their own strength or will, or as a custom, but as those who, led of the Lord and taught by the Spirit, ought to take their proper place of fellowship with one another and the Lord. If this were realized what wonderful power there would be in the assembly of God's children. What holy worship would ascend by Christ, the High Priest, to the Father. How unhindered would the flow of praise be from hearts full of joy and thanksgiving, as the Holy Ghost glorified Jesus, and took of His and showed them to the hearts of the worshippers. There would then be a blessed realization of the deep perfections of Jesus—the surpassing glories and the matchless beauty of His Person, and the

completeness of His work. I say then, as the soul dwelt in calm and solemn meditation on so holy and so sublime a theme, there would be, yea, there must be, a full outflow of praise and thanksgiving. Oh! this is the true and only power of worship: entire subjection of spirit and soul and body to the Lord Jesus by the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in and with us. How often is the question asked, What is to be the subject of one's thoughts at the table of the Lord? Well, I reply, I have no answer to this; but this I say, let there be a thorough, true, and hearty subjection of all the faculties to the Holy Ghost, then there will be no difficulty as to the subject which should occupy the heart and mind, for the Holy Ghost dwells in the believer expressly that He may reveal to him the Lord Jesus Christ in any and in all the aspects of His blessed Person and character as it pleaseth Him. Provided there is a true heart, and practical subjection to Him, He will direct the soul into the right train of thought. This is what is needed: a constant spirit of self-judgment, a counting oneself dead with Christ, and a complete and entire subjection to Christ as Lord, and that by the Holy Ghost who dwelleth in us. For we cannot call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Ghost, and therefore there must of necessity be full liberty to the Holy Ghost. So again, Christ in His death, His priesthood, or in any other character can be only known in a practical way, as we give to the Holy Ghost a place of unhindered liberty and authority. Thus we see it is of the greatest moment that the believer grieve not the Holy Ghost, who is God dwelling on earth in and with him.

But how sad then must be the evil of those

believers who grieve the Holy Ghost by setting up men in His place. May the Lord manifest this fearful sin of the professing Church to those who are true believers in her midst, and lead them out of it in separation from all evil. "For if a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour meet for the master's use, and ready unto every good work."

And yet once more, there are others present at the Lord's table, the worshippers, and who are they? Who, indeed? Sinners saved by sovereign grace, poor, lost, ruined sinners, redeemed by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sinners the vilest, the most corrupt, the farthest away from God, by the power of the Holy Ghost made new creatures in Christ, and brought into the presence, acquaintance, and companionship of the Father and the Son. "Oh! to grace, how great a debtor!" Yes, it is from amongst the very vilest of sinners that God seeketh worshippers.

Great God of wonders! all Thy ways
 Are wondrous, matchless, and divine:
 But the blest triumphs of thy grace,
 Most marvellous—unrivalled shine.
 Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
 Or who has grace so rich and free?

Crimes of such horror to forgive,
 Such guilty, daring worms to spare;
 This is Thy grand prerogative,
 And none can in that honour share.
 Pardon, O God! is only Thine;
 Mercy and grace are all divine.

In wonder lost, with trembling joy,
 We hail the pardon of our God;
 Pardon for crimes of deepest dye,
 A pardon traced in Jesus' blood.
 To pardon thus is Thine alone;
 Mercy and grace are both Thine own.

Soon shall this strange, this wondrous grace,
This perfect miracle of love,
Fill the wide earth, while sweeter praise
Sounds its own note in heaven above.
Who is a pardoning God like Thee ?
Or who has grace, so rich, so free ?

All who confess the Lord Jesus with their mouth and believe in their heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, are saved, and if walking orderly are welcome to a place at the Lord's table to remember Jesus in His death, and to render thanks unto Him who is the God of all grace.

In conclusion, I would observe, that holiness cometh God's house for ever, that the worshippers must be purged worshippers. The Spirit of God is the *Holy Spirit*, and can have no fellowship with sin. Therefore it is of the greatest moment that each individual believer, before he approaches the table of the Lord, should in private make hearty and sincere confession to God, and so, counting upon the justice and faithfulness of God, have the happy consciousness that he is forgiven his sins and cleansed from all unrighteousness. In such a condition of soul he may approach the table of the Lord, and so realizing the persons of Father and Son by the Holy Ghost, worship in spirit and in truth. But if confession be not made then the sin is not put away, and the whole assembly becomes affected and defiled by it; for "evil communications corrupt good manners," and blessing is hindered. May the Lord in His grace keep the feet of His saints continually.

One word about ministry at the table of the Lord, and I have done. One word will be quite sufficient, for it is only needful for me to say that there will never be any difficulty about ministry where there is a whole-hearted subjection to the

Lordship of Jesus by the Holy Ghost. For the flesh being reckoned dead, the Holy Ghost will have liberty to give by one a note of praise; by another, a word of comfort, exhortation, or edification. He alone can give heart and power to lead the assembly in expressions of praise and adoration. Only let the worshippers remember that the Lord Jesus is the Minister of the sanctuary, in the tabernacle which the Lord has pitched and not man, in the heavenlies; and also remember that the Holy Ghost is the Minister on earth, all then will go on decently and in order, and there will be no confusion, and the Father will be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

E. C.

126, *Manor Street,*
Clapham. S.
October, 1865.



BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

TRACTS FOR CHRISTIANS.

- Cease to do Evil; Learn to do Well. 2d.
Fellowship with Christ and One with Another. A Chart. 3d.
Christ All in All. A Chart. 2d.
What is making God a Liar? $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
Justification by the Death of Christ. 1d.
The Coming of Christ to take to Himself His Bride. A Chart. 1d.
A Remarkable Testimony of an Aged Wesleyan. 1d.
The Christian's Position in the World. 1d.
Death and Life—Union and Glory. Thoughts on the Lord's Supper.
None Cast Out. 1s. 6d. per 100.
The Same in a Book. $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
Why, Sir, It's Better and Better. 1d.
The Elect; or, How may I know that I am one of them? 1d.
The Glory of God's Grace. 1d.

W. H. BROOM, 34, PATERNOSTER ROW.

- The Disease and its Cure. 8d. per 100.
A Dying Christ and a Living Christ. 8d. per 100.
Home Truths. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. 4d. per 100.
Me and My. 4d. per 100. The Same in a Book. $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
The Prisoner. 4d. per 100.

W. GIBLING, THE TRIANGLE, HACKNEY.

**REPRINTS
FROM THE "LONDON MESSENGER."**

- Hearts and Minds. 1d.
The New Creation, the Believer's Meekness for Heaven. 1d.

Of E.C., 126, Manor St., Clapham, by Post only.