Are You a Member? And of What?

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A Word to believers as to fellowship with Christians

Introductory Remarks

As long as the solemn question of the soul's eternal salvation is left in dark uncertainty there will be little, if any, freedom of spirit to think of that which interests Christ or concerns His glory, apart from the bare matter of the sinner's peace and safety. On the other hand, when one who professes to have the knowledge of this great salvation gives evidence in walk and ways of cold indifference to those interests, it manifests either a very shallow work in the soul, or no real work at all. For be sure of this, that the work of the Spirit in a soul is as great a reality as the work of Christ for that soul, and that in whomsoever He (the Spirit) dwells, His activity will always tend to the glory of Christ. "He shall glorify Me," said the blessed Lord; "for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you," John 16:14. In case this should fall into the hands of a troubled soul, it may be well to add here, for his comfort, that peace does not depend upon our being satisfied with the work of the Spirit in us, but upon God's satisfaction in the work of Christ for us, and as this rests eternally the same, the ground of our peace is unchanging too. "Christ also hath once suffered for the sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." I Peter 3:18. But it is for those who have been recently brought to the knowledge of salvation that this little book is intended, though it is the earnest prayer of the writer that its pages may graciously be used to the exercise and blessing of every reader who loves our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

How I should like, before we proceed further, to fill your heart (if it is not already full) with the warm and heavenly rays which shine forth from that little sentence in John 13:1—"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end!" "His own!" What a precious thought! His, not only by Creator-right and redemption-title, but His by gift from the Father—"Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me," John 17:6. And so precious is this thought to His own heart, that seven times over in that remarkable out-breathing of His soul to the Father (John 17) He makes mention of it. Is this not enough to fill your heart, dear reader? 'Tis true you are left for a little while in this cold, dark world, but you are "loved" by Him, and loved through everything, right on "to the end." Never dream, I pray you, of asking Him to increase His love toward you. He never could love you more, and He never will love you less. Blessed be His name, His love is like Himself—infinite and eternal.

"*Love that no tongue can teach,*
Love that no thought can reach;
No love like His.
God is its blessed source,
Death ne'er can stop its course,
Nothing can stay its force;
Matchless it is."

Now I need not say that you are not the only one in this poor world loved by Christ and saved by His precious blood. There are other joint-heirs, "many sons," that have God's eternal glory as their bright destiny; and I am desirous of saying a few simple words to you about your path in connection with these, your fellow-Christians—"His own"—left with you in the world. But I would first say,

Be Right with God in Secret

And would earnestly press upon you the deep importance of personal piety, and wholehearted devotedness to Christ, apart from the question of any other saint on earth. May the Holy Spirit of God make this plain to you. Depend upon it, to be right with God in your closet is of equal importance to being right with Him in public, among your fellow-Christians. Take a simple illustration. Will not a good servant see to the proper condition of the glasses, etc., before he puts them in their places on the master's table? And will not the soldier look well that his accouterments are in a bright and worthy state before he steps into rank with his comrades? Mark, I am not going to say a word against right order, but rather to urge its importance. Yet I do see the necessity of pressing upon you a prior thing. What would any master care for the most exact order of laying a table if the knives and forks, etc., were in a dirty and unsatisfactory state, and the servant himself in a disgraceful untidiness? Or what captain is satisfied with the punctuality and regularity of his men, if their rifles were foul and their bayonets rusty? Of course, a servant who cared for the approval of his master would neglect none of these things.

Now pause here a moment, and let me ask myself and you a practical question: Is there anything in your heart which you are well aware would not have a place there for an instant if your blessed Lord and Master had it all His own way with you? Let us honestly face that question, and be very jealous lest there be a single selfish reserve in our hearts from Him. A Christian who cherishes such a reserve is virtually saying, "Lord, I can trust Thee with my safety, but cannot trust Thee with my

happiness." Oh, let us consider Him more, dear reader! "He sold all that He had," and gave His precious lifeblood too, for the joy of making us "His own"; and having done and suffered all this for us, He now gives everything to us, and makes a feast for His own heart in doing it. What a Giver! What a Lover! Blessed, thrice blessed Saviour! Help me praise Him, and let us exalt His name together. Well, the more you become at home with Him, to use a familiar expression, the more you will joyfully anticipate being with Him at home, and the greater heavenly glow and fervor will your testimony have until you get there. No amount of effort will bring about this state; but in keeping His company, and beholding Him in glory, where He now is, you will be "changed into the same image from glory to glory," and thus reflect His moral beauty here below. The more practically we become like Him, the louder our lives speak for Him. Whenever you find that your appetite for Him is diminishing, you may be pretty sure that one or more of the "little foxes that spoil the vines" are finding an undisturbed lodging-place in your heart. Therefore, search diligently, and spare them not, or else bid farewell to your joy and spiritual prosperity. But go at once to Him, and say, with full surrender of your own will, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me (margin, way of pain or grief), and lead me in the way everlasting." Ps. 139:23, 24.

Ever may it be—"Our only grief to give Him pain, our joy to serve and follow Him." What a luxury it is to one that loves the Lord to have the consciousness in his soul that he is ministering pleasure to the heart of Christ! It is

then that the brightest offer the world can make you but crumbles into dust and ashes at your feet.

Steps Rightly Directed, a False Way Detected

It is well at the commencement of your Christian career to be fully alive to the fact that it is the word of God which must be the touchstone for everything in your path, whether personally or relatively. Look at Psalm 119:104, "Through Thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way"; and again, verse 128, "Therefore I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way." Notice how the Holy Spirit speaks through the Psalmist. It is either a right way because according to the word, or it is a false way to be hated. Man naturally loves to tone things down to keep his conscience quiet. God in creation "divided the light from the darkness," and morally He does so still. Man would blend them together in a kind of dim twilight; but beware of these subtle compromises, and like David, say, "The double-minded have I hated, but Thy law do I love." v. 113.

Now do not let this apply only to the question of your salvation and personal state, but to that also which I now desire briefly to dwell upon; viz.,

Your Ground of Fellowship with Other Christians; or, in Other Words, Your Church Position

One of the first things, I believe, which the renewed heart craves for is fellowship with God's people. He finds himself no longer at home in the world, and naturally seeks "his own company." But amidst all the names and divisions of disordered Christendom, a newborn soul

may well inquire, "Where shall I turn to be right?" My answer is, "To God, and to the word of His grace," Acts 20:32. Whoever is wrong, God and His word are right. Get that well grounded in your soul, and "cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." A few years ago two Christians, hitherto strangers to each other, were traveling together in a railway carriage, when, after some conversation about the Lord and His interests, one of them leaned forward and said, "May I ask what denomination you belong to?" "Well, that is a common enough question," replied the other, "but will you first say what you think is to guide me in my path as a Christian?"

He agreed at once that it was the word of God alone that could with certainty direct him. "Then, if you will allow me," said his fellow-traveler, "I will answer your question by proposing another; viz., WHAT DENOMINATION DOES THE WORD OF GOD PUT ME INTO?" After some silent deliberation he said, "Why, none at all." "Then I can't belong to one at all," replied the other; "for if I did (upon your own showing), I should clearly be in a position where the word of God had not placed me." "But," replied the first speaker, "does not the word of God exhort us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, 'and so much the more, as we see the day approaching'?" Heb. 10:25. "Yes, it does. But a Christian need not belong to a denomination to obey that word; for the Lord Jesus said, 'Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them.'" Matt. 18:20.

Now, dear reader, if you look at 2 John 6, you will find that he exhorts the elect lady, and those with her, thus: "And this is love, that we walk after His commandments.

This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it."

Now John had seen the Lord in His wondrous life; had seen Him die upon the cross; and was a witness of His resurrection; beheld Him taken up into Heaven; and was present when on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came down from an ascended Christ to baptize believers into one body, and thus form the Church. He had lived long enough to see evil come into the circle of the professing Church; but what is the remedy? Is it, "Begin afresh with a new and purer sect of a more improved constitution?" Listen to his reply by the Holy Spirit: "This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it." So that the Spirit of God makes it plain that He suffers no innovation of man's to trespass upon the sacred principles of God's word for the guidance of His people, whatever their exercises may be, or whatever the date of their history. Now apply this principle today, and you must find yourself in one of two positions—either on God's ground of gathering the disciples at the beginning, or on some ground that man, in his fancied wisdom or mistaken zeal, has set up since the beginning.

The One Body and Its Members

In Acts 2:42, it is said of the early disciples "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." After the conversion of Saul of Tarsus an entirely new revelation was made to the Church through this once champion persecutor of the saints; namely, that every believer on earth was united to Christ by the Holy Spirit (see Acts 9:4; I Cor. 6:17; I Cor. 12:12-27); that "as the

body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is (the) Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit," I Cor. 12:12, 13. Then is the fact plainly stated—"There is one body," but we are exhorted to "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"; that is, we are to maintain practically what the Holy Spirit has formed spiritually.

There are two classes of Christians in the world. One practically says, "Man has formed many bodies, and I being a member of one of these (the best according to my opinion), desire to serve its interests in every possible way I can." The other says, "God has formed one body and made me a member of it, and now I desire by His grace to serve the interests of the Head of that body, according to the principles laid down in His Word who formed it."

Now, dear reader, to which of these classes do you belong? Alas! How many a precious saint of God is represented by the first! Do you not often hear a Christian talk about "joining" this or that body? Surely such a one forgets (if he ever knew) that the only body which God in His word recognizes is the "one body" of which Christ Himself is the Head, and of which every true believer is a living member. If saved, therefore (to use a common expression), you are already a "joined member." "He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit," I Cor. 6:17. And in I Cor. 12:18, using the figure of the human body, the apostle says, "GOD HATH SET the members every one of them in the body, AS IT HATH PLEASED HIM." What sad confusion then to talk of

joining some other body. Why not be content with the place God has given you in the "body of Christ," and seek through grace to fulfill the responsibilities of such a place?

Now the Holy Spirit certainly never baptized believers into a sect or denomination. Look at I Cor. 1:12, 13, and chapter 3:3, and you will see that He meets on the very threshold, so to speak, the incoming of sectarian spirit in Corinth with a most withering stroke of condemnation. "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" But you may inquire, "If it is wrong to stand upon or uphold a sectarian position, is there any definite way laid down in God's word of expressing the truth of the one body?" To answer this we must look at what Scripture says of

The Lord's Table

If you turn to I Cor. 10:16, you will find that just as twelve loaves on the table of showbread expressed what Israel was; viz., twelve tribes (Lev. 24:5, 6), so the one loaf of the Lord's supper is the symbol to express the truth of what the Church on earth is; viz., one body. "We being many are one bread (or loaf) and one body: for we are all partakers of that bread (or loaf)," v. 17. So that in partaking of the one loaf, the divinely taught Christian owns his union with all true believers on the face of the whole earth, whatever their ignorance, weakness, or Christ-dishonoring divisions may be. But while he does this, he can only have fellowship with those who are seeking to walk in obedience to the word, and in separation from manifested evil. The Holy Spirit of God would certainly never seek to maintain outward unity at

the expense of inward holiness.* (Read I Cor. 5:6, 7, 8, 13.)

* The fellowship in the Church of England is much broader than Scripture owns, because every moral-living baptized and confirmed parishioner is admitted to the Lord's supper, whether he be converted or not; while, on the other hand, that owned in all the dissenting bodies is much too narrow, because in them only those are recognized as "members" who hold the views of this or that particular sect or denomination. If Scripture therefore is to be your guide, you must be on a ground wide enough to include every member of the body of Christ, whose walk and ways are according to holiness and truth, and narrow enough to exclude all that scriptural discipline would shut out.

I would just add here, that while the tenth chapter of this epistle speaks of the Lord's Table, the eleventh speaks more particularly of

The Lord's Supper

Here our divine affections are called forth in remembrance of the blessed worthy One Himself, and whilst doing this together we "show His death until He come." Then we shall no longer need such symbols, but see Him face to face. But is it not sad to think of the cold-hearted neglect of this blessed privilege by many of those whose redemption cost Him His precious blood? Think you, is it nothing to His heart that those whom He loves so tenderly should manifest such disregard for what may be called His farewell wish, expressed, as it was, on the night of His betrayal, and re-expressed from His place of exaltation in glory? "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death

till He come," I Cor. 11:26. And we find, in Acts 20:7, that the disciples, in loving response to this their Lord and Master's wish, came together "on the first day of the week, to break bread." Yet in our day some consider the first Sunday in a month sufficiently frequent, others once a quarter, and many even allow a still longer time to elapse without granting Him this special desire of His heart. Now which of us would not freely acknowledge that it was deplorable ingratitude on the part of Pharaoh's butler, when, after Joseph had turned his sadness into joy, it was said, "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him," Gen. 40:23. And this too, after Joseph's touching appeal, in which he said, "When it shall be well with thee, think on me."

But still Joseph only ministered joy to his fellow-prisoner for three days, and even this cost him no more than the mere utterance of a few short sentences. While for us the spotless Son of God has purchased eternal blessings, and joys that know no end, at such cost as only He who can fathom the depths of Calvary's bitterness and woe can rightly estimate. Now what shall be said of him (with whom it is well indeed), who, without a single merit or the slightest cost, receives these infinite and blood-bought blessings at His hand, and the words of eternal life from His lips, and yet can hear Him say, "This do in remembrance of Me," without the least apparent response of heart to it? What must the angels who look on (I Cor. 11:10) think of such unexampled ingratitude? Nay, let us ask ourselves, what must the blessed One Himself think of it?

Not long ago we were told that a few Christians in a country village were often kept, for more than a year together, from eating the Lord's Supper, just because a

certain preacher could not go over to "administer it to them." This was truly a grievous mistake; for there is no such thing even hinted at in Scripture as any man (not even an apostle) being set apart for such a thing. "The disciples came together to break bread." It might be well to say here that, according to God's word, all true believers are now priests (Rev. 1:6; I Pet. 2:5, 9), and as such they have the privilege of entering the holiest with boldness, bringing their praises to the Father and to the Son with glad and worshipping hearts.

How sadly has human interference set aside the simplicity of divine order, robbing the Lord of His glory, His people of their blessing, and dragging the highest heavenly privileges of Christianity down to the earthly level of Judaism! May the Lord deliver His own from such a state of things so contrary to His mind.

But, returning to our subject, let us never forget that the Lord's Supper must be received in the spirit of self-judgment. (See I Cor. 11:28-31.) Having judged ourselves, and spared nothing about us that is unworthy of Him, we come together, with grateful and undistracted hearts, to think of all the worthiness that is in Him who went down into death for us. What a soul-absorbing privilege it would ever be if our practical state were no hindrance to the Holy Spirit leading us into the true enjoyment of such a heavenly feast! May the frequency of it never rob us of the freshness of it.

But there is another feature of

The Holy Spirit's Presence on Earth

which is important to be clear about. The Lord Jesus promised that the Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth,

when He came, should not only be in them (individually) but with them (corporately), John 14:16, 17. And without going into the matter now, it is evident from such scriptures as I Cor. 14 that in the beginning of the Church's history His presence was owned and His guidance and operation looked for, both in public meetings and with individuals. Alas, how human arrangements have set aside the word of God in this matter, robbing His people, and quenching His Spirit! And so widespread in Christendom has this evil become, that, look where you will, from St. Peter's in Rome down to the smallest dissenting chapel, you can see it. Instead of believers, when assembled together for worship or edification, depending on the Lord alone for the guidance of His Spirit, why, even a prayer meeting can scarcely be held without the appointment of someone to "conduct" it. This one or that, whether led of the Spirit or not, is called upon to "engage in prayer," while the "prayer leader" is supposed to "open" the meeting and "close" it, whatever his state of soul may be. What is all this but man usurping the place of the Holy Spirit, the sad fruit of unbelief as to His personal presence? Some believers even go so far as to pray for Him to be sent, or to Him to come, and this notwithstanding the plain word of the Lord—"He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you FOR EVER," John 14:16. It should, however, be borne in mind that there is a wide difference between a meeting for preaching the gospel to the unsaved (when the individual servant, according to his measure of gift, is solely responsible to deliver his Master's message), and a company of God's redeemed people, coming together for worship or edification.

Your Position Tested

Now, with these simple facts before us, suppose that Peter, James, and John, with a few others of the early disciples, should have lived until the present day, say in one of our English towns, and that they were still meeting in the simplicity of divine order as at the beginning; i.e., gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus (compare Matt. 18:20 with John 20:19), remembering Him in the breaking of bread on the first day of the week, and waiting for His coming again (examine Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11:23-26); maintaining scriptural discipline (see I Cor. 5:9-13; I Tim. 5:20; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14, 15; I Thess. 5:14; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 2:15; Gal. 6:1); endeavoring to maintain the truth in practice that "there is one body" (Eph. 4:3, 4); and recognizing the presence and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst to guide by the Holy Spirit whom He will, whether in worship or ministry, thereby ignoring, of course, all human rules and every vestige of what is merely man's usurped authority. Now calmly pause for a moment and ask yourself the question just referred to: "To what denomination would THEY belong?" It will surely not take much spiritual discernment to answer that question with a very decided negative; and, "Of course," you will say, "none at all."

But, to bring the question somewhat nearer home, if you were living in that very town yourself, would not you like to have the apostles' fellowship? I am sure you would. Well, then, in order to get it, you must first leave every kind of sectarian ground set up by man since the beginning of the Church's history upon earth and accept, with its consequences, the "apostles' doctrine." Then, having got upon their ground of "fellowship," you

would have the privilege of expressing it with them in the "breaking of bread." "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ?" I Cor. 10:16. But you may say, perhaps, that the apostles are not living on earth now. Well, but, thank God, their doctrine is—"the word which liveth and abideth forever"; and that puts me in this day on the same ground of fellowship that they were upon in that day; i.e., if I submit to be guided and governed by it.

Objections Answered

This may perhaps fall into the hands of some older Christian, who says, "Well, I see that the ground I have been upon has no warrant in Scripture; but I am not capable of putting the thing right." Probably not; but your responsibility is to put yourself right. "If a man therefore purge himself from these (vessels to dishonor), he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." 2 Tim. 2:19-22. To Jeremiah of old, who stood valiantly for God amidst a sinful and rebellious people, it was said, "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them." Jer. 15:19.

"But," reasons another, "ought I not to stay in the place and among the people where my soul was converted?" Well, I think you will see at once that such a principle could not possibly apply to every Christian. Some are converted amid the gross darkness of Romanism: would

you have them stay there?—Saul of Tarsus on the roadside amongst the haters of Christ?

One is saved on the battlefield; and only tonight I heard of a young man brought to God while tempest-tossed and well-nigh driven to despair in the Bay of Biscay. In all such cases God is sovereign ("The wind bloweth where it listeth"); He can convert a soul anywhere, and by any means. But from the moment he is converted he is no longer his own, nor has he any right to choose his own path, or do his own will; he must henceforth consult the wishes of another—even his own precious Lord and Master, and seek His all-sufficient grace and power to carry those wishes out.

A man may enlist for a soldier in the common dram-shop, in the public market, or wherever the recruiting sergeant can prevail upon him to join the colors, but as you are aware, from that day he is no longer his own master: he must prepare himself to obey the wishes of His Majesty. Now what would you think of a recruit who insisted upon staying where he was enlisted, or even with the recruiting staff? Such a course might possibly suit him, but he must now yield to other and higher authority.

There may be another who says, "Nearly all my Christian friends are in such a sect; and, besides, is it not right to go where you can get the most good?"

Well, I have no doubt that Jonathan might have reasoned thus when, in David's days, he chose rather to think of his own good with his own relations in Saul's court than of following one who so dearly loved him in a pathway of suffering, loneliness and rejection. But had poor, lamented Jonathan consulted David's interests instead of

his own, had he devotedly cleaved to him, hated and hunted though David was, he would probably never have fallen, as he did, on the mountains of Gilboa. Ah, dear fellow-believer, depend upon it, neither the opinion of your friends, nor your own judgment of what is most for your good, can guide you in these matters! The truth of God alone can direct you in a Christ-honoring path, and the God of truth alone can sustain you in it.

The Scripture which makes you wise unto salvation furnishes you unto all good works; i.e., with all needful instruction for your path (2 Tim. 3:15-17). And since this is so, you ought to be as sure of one as the other. There can surely be no shadow of uncertainty to faith when God has spoken His mind; but how sad that so many, even of His professed people, should glibly speak of "essentials" and "non-essentials" in the things of God, which usually means that whatever concerns their own safety and blessing is essential, and all the rest, no matter how closely connected with the glory of the blessed Son of God, is to be treated with comparative indifference as non-essential! Oh, what miserable selfishness does this manifest! What a different state of things characterized the dear apostle! The earnest desire of his heart was, that Christ should be "magnified in my body, whether by life or by death"; his one motto was—"To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. 1:20, 21.

But there is yet another objection which is sometimes raised against leaving a human for a divine ground of association and fellowship; viz., the failures and inconsistencies of those who professedly occupy this ground. Most sorrowfully, though frankly, do I own that those who, through grace, have clearly seen the place to

be of God, and sought to occupy it, have very painfully and disgracefully failed; while some, no doubt, who professedly took the ground, never saw what they were doing, nor had any depth of godly exercise about it; so that when their faithfulness to the principles which professedly separated them was put to the test, they either in practice denied those very principles or else forsook them altogether.

This, however, no more proves the position wrong than the failure of His Majesty's Ministers in the House of Commons proves that it is not the true House of Parliament, or Uzziah's failure in the temple, or, still worse, that of king Ahaz, proves that it was not God's center of gathering for all the thousands of Israel (2 Chron. 26:16-20; 2 Kings 16:10-17); while, on the other hand, the most spotless morality in those assembled by Jeroboam at Dan or Bethel, the most ardent zeal, the most unexampled self-denial, coupled with the greatest popularity and the voice of the majority (ten tribes against two), could not possibly make those altars the right centers, or justify Jeroboam in setting them up.

Concluding Remarks

God has ever claimed the right to fix a gathering center for His people, and to settle the order of priestly service and worship; and surely this is not less true of the Church than of Israel. But let it be well remembered that He never regarded mere correct outward order as sufficient to satisfy Him. (See Isaiah 1:11-17.) In the future history of His ancient people there will be, according to prophecy, a great re-gathering to God's center—Jerusalem. But what a sifting will they have to pass through ere their state is suited to the holiness of

Jehovah! And they will be sifted, too, by what is false among themselves.

What a solemn thought for us, since a similar state of things in Church history has been foretold by the apostle Paul in Acts 20:30, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." But, as already noticed, the apostle at once carries them to the resting-place of the faith of His chosen in all ages; viz., "God, and the word of His grace." Whatever sifting may come, blessed be His name, we shall ever find in Him and in His word all that we need until the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, and with His "shout" bring about, "in the twinkling of an eye," that great gathering around Himself spoken of in 2 Thess. 2:1.

"*Then all that grieves shall pass away,*
And saints shall see a glorious day."

Not a division among them, nor a stain upon them! Till then "every one that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 1 John 3:3.

"*Watching and ready may we be,*
As those that wait their Lord to see." *Amen.*

Earnestly do I entreat you, dear reader, in view of that day when His eyes shall surely meet yours in glory, to test your church position as well as the ground of your peace and safety by the Lord's own question to some in the days of His flesh; viz., "Is it from heaven, or of men?" Luke 20:4. Does it bear the unmistakable stamp of divine and scriptural authority? Or is it merely endorsed by the hand of human expediency or mere religious opinion? Never, never rest until you can say, without a doubt, "I am, through grace, in a position where my

gracious Lord would have me, because I am where the word of God has placed me"; and then with purpose of heart and fervor of spirit seek to adorn it by a holy, separate, and devoted walk, and so when He comes you will not only be ready to "go in to the marriage" through faith in Him, but get His approving "well done" for faithfulness to Him.

Difficulties you may have, will have, but if in the path that pleases Him, you may with all confidence count upon His sympathy and succor; and even though the misunderstandings of your fellow-Christians add bitterness to your cup, yet the sense of His smile will more than recompense you. "Them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed," 1 Sam. 2:30. "If any man serve Me, him will My Father honor." John 12:26.

May such "honor" be yours, dear reader, now and "till He come."