Christ the Centre; or, Why Do We Meet in His Name Alone?

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Or, Why Do We Meet in His Name Alone?

This is a question often put to those who meet in the name of the Lord Jesus. Many have expressed a desire that a plain tract might be written on the subject. The following considerations are affectionately presented to all the beloved children of God:

First. The Worthiness of Christ

It is "God who hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 9, 11). Thus hath our blessed God and Father delighted to honor Him, who "is the head of the body, the Church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence" (Col. i. 18). In this name, so precious to every believer, did all Christians meet in the days of the apostles; and when the veil of the future was drawn aside, what did John, the servant of Jesus Christ, behold? When he saw Jesus Christ, he says, "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last" (Rev. i. 16, 17).

"A door was opened in heaven." What a sight! The vision of the future glory of the Lamb in the midst of the millions and millions of the redeemed. "A Lamb as it had been slain." "And they sung a new song." What will it be to be there; to hear that swell of joy unspeakable—to

join that song? Not one redeemed to God by His blood will refuse to sing, "Thou art worthy." Angelic hosts cry with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and honor, and glory, and blessing;" yea, all redeemed creation shall be heard saying, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. v. 6, 14).

Thus shall our adorable Lord be adored, and owned in heaven and throughout all creation. This is God's estimate of the risen Christ; who once died for our sins—the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. And thus shall God's will be done in heaven. Should an anxious, troubled soul read these lines, mark well that this is the redemption-glory of Christ. And who were those worshipping millions, redeemed by his blood? Dying thieves, Mary Magdalenes; sinners of the city. And is Jesus worthy of bringing such to glory? Yes, the most holy, holy, holy God says, He is worthy! and all creation shout, Amen.

Oh, do you, my reader, now give God credit? Such is the worthiness of this risen Jesus, that God says, "Be it known unto you that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii. 38). Thus salvation is wholly through Christ. Blessed are they who can say, "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

I do not presume to be able to set forth, by pen or tongue, the glorious pre-eminence of Christ. I point to the Scriptures, that so clearly declare the worthiness of

Christ. But many who read this paper will say, What true Christian doubts for a moment the worthiness of Christ, or the greatness of His exalted name? True, true, there is a chord in every Christian's heart that responds to the name of Jesus. But the question is, how much or how great is that worthiness? There may be one thousand Christians in a town, or ten thousand in a city—I mean such as really have redemption through the blood of Christ; whose sins are forgiven. Now, if Jesus be worthy of the united praise and worship of all creation, if all the millions of the redeemed in heaven shall gather around His adorable person, then is He not worthy of the united worship of one thousand in a town, and ten thousand in a city, on earth? Surely in heaven every name and sect must fall. And why not on earth? It is a great mistake to suppose, then, that we separate from every name and sect because we think ourselves better than the dear children of God in those sects; far be the thought; no! it is because Jesus is worthy—yes, worthy the sacrifice of at once giving up every name and sect, and of gathering to His blessed name and person alone. Yes, my fellow-believer, He is worthy that you, whoever you are, and to whatever sect you belong, He is worthy that you should own no other name but His. What must angels think, knowing and delighting, as they do, in the exalted name of Jesus, when they see our ways on earth? The divisions on earth must present a dark contrast to the unity of heaven. In many places all God's redeemed people may be seen bearing various names; and not two even, or three, meet in the whole town in the name of Jesus alone. And yet, most assuredly, Jesus is worthy that every believer in the place should meet only in His name.

Now, if God's will is so plainly done in heaven, by all gathering to the person of the Lamb, how can I pray, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven," unless I am prepared to give up every name and sect on earth, as it is done in heaven? Would it not be more consistent to say—I have been in such a sect, and all my friends are there; excuse me, therefore, from doing Thy will on earth, as I shall do it, and as it is done, in heaven? Is it narrowness to do the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven? Is it too much to own the Lordship of Christ, to the glory of God the Father, and to own no other but the name of Christ? Man says it is no matter what name you bear. God sets the highest value on the name of Jesus.

Every Christian who owns the Lordship of Jesus, who has visited the Romish places of worship on the continent, must have been deeply pained at the reverence paid to the name of the Virgin. And is not human nature the same everywhere? Is there not the same idolatrous tendency where any name is owned as the head of a sect? As that name is exalted, the name of Jesus is disowned, until at length it is a small matter to be a Christian, but a great one to belong to the sect. Surely this is wood, hay and stubble, that will not endure the coming day. In the days of the apostles Jesus was the name exalted above every name. To exalt another, though it were a Paul, or a Cephas, was denounced by the Spirit of God as carnality and schism. Even to tolerate another name, or names, was virtually to lower the glorious Christ to the level of a mere man (1 Cor. i. 12; iii. 4, 5).

Is it not the same now? Jesus is worthy of the united worship of the millions of the redeemed who shall be

gathered in heaven; therefore He is worthy of the united praise and worship of all Christians now on earth. Whatever others may do—whether they own that name alone before the world or not—fellow-believer, if thou desirest to do the will of God thy path is plain: give up every name and sect, and meet only in the name of Jesus, heaven's exalted Lord.

Second. The Sovereignty of the Spirit of God

A question may now arise in the mind as to what order of church government is really according to the mind of God. This leads us to the second consideration, The Sovereignty of the Spirit of God, as the second reason why we meet in the name of the Lord Jesus alone. Before Jesus left this world, whilst in the midst of His sorrowing disciples, he said, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John xiv. 16, 17).

The Lord Jesus solemnly promised that the Comforter or Guardian should teach us all things. Jesus says, "HE SHALL TESTIFY OF ME" (xv. 26). Observe, Jesus did not promise an influence; but the real, divine person of the Holy Ghost; as real a person as Jesus. And as really as Jesus had testified of the Father, so really should the Spirit testify of Jesus. And further, that HE, the Holy Spirit, should guide us into all truth. "HE shall glorify ME" (xvi. 13). This promise God hath fulfilled. Jesus being glorified on high, God hath sent the Holy Ghost (Acts ii. 4-38). Now, from that moment, we search in vain

in the New Testament for any church government except the sovereign guidance of the Holy Ghost.

As really as the blessed Jesus had been present with the disciples in the Gospels, exactly so is the Holy Ghost present with the church in the Acts. Pentecost was a marvellous display of the presence and power of the Holy Ghost. And again, "When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness" (iv. 31). Yea, so real was the presence of the Holy Ghost, that Peter, in the case of Ananias, said, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" etc. (v. 3). And when the Gospel was preached to the Gentiles, the Holy Ghost fell on them in like manner (xi. 15). Also at Antioch (xiii. 52). And how marked the guidance of the Spirit to the Apostle Paul and his companions, when "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia," and when they would have gone to Bithynia, "but the Spirit suffered them not" (xvi. 6, 7). See also xix. 2. If we now turn to 1 Cor. xii., the government of the Spirit in the Church is stated with the utmost clearness: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

This passage is often applied to the world, in violent opposition to that scripture which saith, "The world cannot receive him, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him" (John xiv. 17). But whatever variety of gift in the Church, "all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will" (1 Cor. xii. 11).

Now tell me what denomination thus owns the Spirit of God in our day. Nay, the moment any assembly of Christians do thus own the Spirit of God, that moment they cease to be a sect, or denomination; because the Holy Ghost would not honor any name but the name of Jesus. Now let us compare an assembly eighteen hundred years ago with a denominational assembly now, and this will be plain. All the Christians in a neighborhood assembled together in the name of Jesus; the Spirit gave diversities of gifts; some were gifted to preach, others to teach, others to exhort, and so on with all the various manifestations of the Spirit. And He, the Spirit, was really present in their midst, dividing to every man severally as He would. They speak two or three—if anything is revealed to another that sitteth by, the first holds his peace—and this is the order of God: as we read (1 Cor. xiv. 29-33), "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge. If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."

When the sovereign guidance of the Spirit of God was owned, this was plainly the order. Now let us enter an assembly belonging to any denomination of the present day. Tell me where is the Holy Spirit either expected or allowed to divide to every man severally, as He will? This may not be intentional: the presidency of the Holy Ghost is forgotten. A man fills His place and, whether led of, or happy in, the Spirit or not, he must occupy the time. This disowning of the personal presence and sovereign

guidance of God the Holy Ghost is most sad every way. The diverse gifts are not exercised: the work of the ministry becomes a burthen to the one man. But more than all, God is disowned in the assembly for guidance in worship, and a human order, or, rather, every kind of human disorder, takes the place.

It may sound well to call it liberty of conscience; but where is the liberty of the Spirit of God, to use whom He will, for the edification of the Church of God? Is this a light matter? Was not the disowning the guidance and government of God by His people Israel, and the desire to have a man in God's place, the first sad step in the downward path of that people? And what is the history of the prophets, but that of a few men (in the midst of general departure from God) still finding and holding fast this blessed reality—the presence of God? How solemn the teaching in the book of Jeremiah: he sat alone, yet called by the name of the Lord God of hosts. How sweet the words of the Lord to him: "Let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them" (See Jer. xv. 16-21).

Such is the solemn yet blessed place of all, in these days, who have been led to own the real presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly. The Lord's words have indeed been found to be sweeter than man's. Oh, that all God's dear children, in every denomination, knew the blessedness of unfeigned subjection of heart to the sovereign guidance of the Holy Ghost. Where there is this, not in mere form, but in reality, He does testify of Christ in such a manner that no human wisdom can even imitate. Often the hymns by one, the prayers by others, and the reading of the Word, as led by the Holy Ghost, so manifest the divine guidance, and give such a sense

of the presence of God, as can only be enjoyed where the Spirit of God is thus owned. I cannot then go where He is not owned whom the Father hath sent to guide and guard us and abide with us unto the end. It is no matter what may be substituted—whether the Pope, or the Emperor, or the Queen, or the Conference, or the minister—God is right, and man is wrong. It is not a question of opinion, but of owning or displacing the Holy Ghost, as the sovereign guide and ruler of the assembly. I have found the reality of His very presence, and for this I must be separate from every community—Greek, Romish, or Protestant, all alike—where He is not thus owned.

Third. The Unity of the One Body

I now state the third reason why we meet in the name of Christ alone—The Unity of the Church; or, more correctly, the unity of the one body. I am not aware that there is such a passage of Scripture as one Church; but there is "one body" (Eph. iv. 4). The word translated Church simply means assembly. It is so used to describe a crowd of heathen, in Acts xix. 32, 39. The Church of God is the assembly of God—saved persons in every place, who assemble, as such, to worship God; all their sins being put away for ever (Heb. x.). Such an assembly they were not to forsake. No other assembly can possibly be called a Church or Assembly of God. Nor could even such an assembly be truly called the Church of God, unless that assembly truly owned God the Holy Ghost, to guide and guard them, in all things, as the assemblies of God did in the days of the apostles.

Take the following illustration: Suppose the Queen of England sends out a commander-in-chief to the British

army in India, and that, for a time, the army puts itself entirely under his command; it could then be properly called the Queen's army. But if that army were to set aside the commander-in-chief, and appoint another of their own; or if the army should divide into separate parts, each division appointing its own commander, each soldier might be still a British soldier, but could that divided army be correctly called the army of the Queen? Having set aside the authority of her Majesty's appointed commander-in-chief, would not every division be in a state of mutiny, and would it not be disloyalty to join the ranks of any such mutinous division?

Now apply this to the Church or assembly of God. For a time the authority of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, was owned, just as the British army, for a time, owned the authority of the Queen's commander-in-chief. Then the sovereign authority of the Spirit of God was set aside, and the authority of the Pope of Rome was put in the place of God the Holy Ghost. Can the Church of Rome, then, be called the true Church of God? Impossible! She has mutinied against God's Commander-in-chief, the Holy Ghost. To join her ranks is disloyalty to Christ.

But if I must declare the whole counsel of God, am I not compelled to adopt the same conclusions respecting every division of the professing Church? Take the Greek Church: has it not set aside the command of the Holy Ghost? And though it put so high a person as the Emperor of all the Russias in the place of the Holy Ghost, yet would it not be mutiny to join its ranks? Take, again, what is called the Church of England: are we not compelled to acknowledge that the sovereign command of the blessed Spirit is entirely set aside? As in Russia so

in England—the head of the world's government is made the head of the Church; and, instead of the Holy Ghost being allowed to divide severally as He will, a prime minister, whatever his principles may be, can appoint a minister over a given town or village, and, according to this system, no other person ought dare to name the name of Christ in that so-called parish.

And, as I have before proved, every other division of the professing Church fails to recognize the personal government of the Holy Ghost, and sets up a government of its own; for though the union of Church and State be renounced, a "General Assembly," or "General Conference," or "Convention," is not getting nearer true subjection to the Spirit; therefore, no division of the professing Church can be called the true Assembly or Church of God any more than a division of the British army which failed to recognize the commander-in-chief, and set up a commander of its own, could be called the true army of the Queen.

I am fully aware that the personal guidance of the blessed Spirit of God has been so long forgotten, that it is most difficult to make even Christians understand what is meant. Take another illustration: A certain statesman is announced to preside over a public meeting of the inhabitants of a given town. The meeting assembles; the statesman comes; he stands on the platform, but nobody recognizes him; he speaks, but still no one knows him. Message after message is sent to his house, begging him to come; they then desire his influence, and not knowing his personal presence, they appoint some one else to preside. Such is a precise picture of the divisions of the present day. However we may have grieved and disowned the Spirit, still that

precious promise is fulfilled, "And he (the Father) shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." Yes, as the statesman was present, though not known, when the letters were sent to his house, even so in the assembly of Christians, the Holy Ghost has come, is present at the very time prayer is being offered in ignorance, for Him to come from heaven. Yea, to hear many Christians pray, one would almost think that they were praying for an influence. Would it not be shocking to speak of God the Father as an influence? Would it not be most revolting to say the life of God the Son, on earth, was only an allegory or an influence? And is not God the Holy Ghost as real a person now on earth as Jesus was when on earth, and now is in heaven? What a commander is to an army, or a president is to a meeting, such is the Holy Ghost to the assembly of God—commanding, directing, using whom He will. Where He is not thus owned, no assembly, even of Christians, can be called God's assembly; and hence from all such assemblies I must separate, if I would be loyal to God.

But it may be objected, Has there not been failure and division amongst those who professed to own the Spirit of God? Sadly true; but nothing could more clearly prove the truth of these statements respecting the Spirit's presence. What has been the cause of all the sorrow and division? The setting aside the sovereign guidance of the Holy Ghost. But to say that failure is a reason why any should not own the guidance of the Spirit in the assembly, or refer to it as an excuse for remaining where He is disowned, is like a person saying because he, or any other Christian, has failed in walk, that therefore he should, as an individual, cease to walk in the Spirit. Should not our past sins and failures make us the more

watchful and earnest to walk in the Spirit? He alone is the safeguard of the Christian and the Church. Blessed Guardian! The source of every failure the Church has ever had has been by disowning the guidance of the Spirit: no matter what comes, if she only trusts her blessed Guardian, all is well. So with the Christian: if walking after the flesh a straw may cause a fall—but if walking in the Spirit, no matter what temptation, all is well. Every past failure, then, in the Church, or Assembly, calls for unfeigned subjection to the Spirit of God. What would you think of a man saying, Such a person, who professed to be a Christian, has failed, and has been found drunk in the streets; therefore I may remain a drunkard with safety? Is it not the same in principle to say, Such of the children of God have failed to keep the unity of the Spirit; therefore I may now remain where the Spirit is not owned? I beg of you, judge not this weighty question by the failure of men, but by the Word of God.

What then is the "one body"? (Eph. iv. 4). The Church of Rome is not even the catholic church; much less can she be the "one body." Catholic means universal; so that the millions of the Greek and Anglican and other churches are so many millions of living witnesses against the catholicity of the Romish church. It cannot be either the one church or the "one body," being but a division—and the same remarks apply to every other division.

"All mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (John xvii.). These precious words of Jesus embrace every child of God during this dispensation. What then is the glory that the Father hath given to Jesus? He hath "raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right

hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 19-23). And again, "And he is the HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH; WHO IS THE BEGINNING, THE FIRST-BORN FROM THE DEAD, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence" (Col. i. 18).

The glory, then, given to Jesus is given to Him as THE RISEN CHRIST; and, as the risen Christ, He is the beginning and head of the body. Every member, then, of the one body must be risen with Christ. And thus, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, or a new creation. Now, does not Jesus say, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them"? And this is true of all that are His. Then every Christian is one with the risen Christ, in the highest glory; as it is written, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. ii. 6).

What a vast difference, then, there must be betwixt a heavenly risen body and an earthly society! The only earthly society that God ever had was the nation of the Jews. Even during the life-time of Christ, the little company or flock of disciples were of that nation. It was not until after His resurrection, and ascension to glory, that the Holy Ghost could be given to form "the Church, which is his body." This was the mystery kept hid from ages, that the earthly society, or nation of the Jews, should for a time be set aside; and that the Holy Ghost should gather out of all nations, Jews and Gentiles,—a

HEAVENLY BODY—and that this body should be joined to the head, in risen, highest glory; blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places IN CHRIST. And mark, all this is true of every child of God during this dispensation; because Christ says to the Father, "All mine are thine." Wherever the child of God is, as to his body on earth, in spirit he is as really one in the risen Christ as a member of the human body is joined to the person whose it is. Yea, our oneness in Christ is not union, but perfect unity. As we could not say the union of the members of the human body, for all those members constitute one person, so also is the heavenly risen Christ. "For, 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 Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free," etc. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. xii. 12-28).

Certainly the Spirit uses the strongest possible words and the most striking figures to express this wondrous unity. Compare the above passage with the following: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Eph. v. 30). It does not say we were one with Him during His life in the flesh—that were impossible. Had he not died, He must have remained alone (John xii. 25). Earthly oneness of sinful men with a sinless Christ could not be; no, He must die, and has died for the sins of many; and having passed through death for them, as their substitute—having, through the shedding of His precious blood, paid their ransom, He has been raised from among the dead, and, as their surety, Justified (Isaiah l. 8). And all this for us; "Raised again for our

justification" (Romans iv. 25). And thus we are reckoned dead with Him, justified with Him, and one with Him in that risen, justified, sinless state. So that we are, not were, one with Him. As a man is one person, though having many members, so is the risen Christ; though having many members on earth, yet all joined to, and one with, and in, Christ, the head, in heaven. "We are members of his body." "There is one body" (Eph. iv. 4; v. 30). What a wondrous new creation, new existence this is—translated into the kingdom of His dear Son—we are, not we shall be when we die. "Hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. i. 13).

It is the forgetting of this present reality, the oneness of the whole Church of God in the risen Christ in heavenly glory, that is one sad cause of the worldly systems and earthly divisions which men call churches. I often ask, "When you are in heaven, will you tolerate sects and divisions?" "Oh, dear, no!" is the reply. Christ will then be all. But are we not now raised with Him, and made to sit with Him in heavenly places? (Eph. ii. 6). And is not Christ all now? (Col. iii. 11). In the new creation there is neither Jew nor Greek, Romanist or Protestant, Independent or Methodist; oh, no! CHRIST IS ALL. Old things ARE passed away; behold all things ARE become new, and all things of God. And this is true of every man in Christ. He is a new creature (2 Cor. v. 17, 18).

The risen body of Christ, then, is one, composed of all true believers out of every nation; a new creation from among the dead: raised together and joined together by God the Father (Eph. ii.). Can never be separated (Romans viii. 39). There are no divisions in that heavenly body, neither indeed can be; for the old things are

passed away. Blessed Jesus! Thy prayer is answered —"That all may be one" (John xvii). Yes, all who believe are one with Christ in the heavenly places.

What, then, is the will of God as to believers on earth? for, whilst one with Christ in heaven, we are still for a very little while absent from the Lord whilst here in the body. I do not wish to state opinions; but what is the mind of the Lord? Solemn question! May he give grace to do his precious will.

That God condemns division none would wish to deny who bow to His inspired Word. At the very first appearance or bud of division, the apostle says, "Now, I beseech you, brethren, BY THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you. . . . Every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided?" (1 Cor. i. 10). Surely I cannot mistake the mind of the Lord in this day, when every one saith, I am of Rome, I of the Greek, I of the Anglican, I of Wesley, etc., etc. God beseeches all believers, by the glory and pre-eminence of the name of the Lord Jesus, that there be no divisions. Not one name or division can God tolerate. To allow any name but His, is to lower His blessed name to the same level of Paul. If it is thus God's will that there should be no divisions, how can I belong to any, or in any way countenance any sect, without positive disobedience to God's revealed mind? Do, my reader, answer that question in the presence of God, with His Word before you.

Lest there should be any mistake, the Spirit of God again speaks on the same subject: "For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and

strife, and divisions, 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?" If it thus grieved the Spirit to say, "I am of Paul, or Apollos," does it now please the Spirit to say, I am of Wesley, I of the Independents? Is this carnality, or is it spirituality?—does God approve or disapprove?

Yea, God could not speak more plainly, not only as to what He condemns, but also what His will is as to what is right: "That there should be no schism (or division) in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another" (1 Cor. xii. 25). Man says there should be sects, and would have me join one or help to increase it. God says there should be none, for the body is one; shall I obey God or man? Judge ye.

What a blessed unity—one with the head above, and one with every member here below. Yes, every member—every Christian on earth. How precious the will of God: "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. xii. 26, 27).

Surely, now, we have failed to own this wondrous unity. But let us not lower the standard. Let us not call evil good. Surely division is an evil, and a bitter thing in the sight of God. He even classes it with such sins as adultery, murder, and drunkenness (Gal. v. 17-21). The word translated heresies means sects. Oh, let us then return unto the Lord, with deep humiliation. Let us confess the common sin and shame of the divided Church.

We are called to heavenly oneness with the risen Christ. It is the will of God that "ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit," etc. (Eph. iv. 1, 4). Would you, my fellow-believer, do the will of God? Here, then, is the blessed path—the unity of the Spirit. This must ever be to the head—Christ. The blessed Spirit gathers to the person of Christ; and where two or three are GATHERED IN HIS NAME, there He is in the midst of them. Man makes a meeting in what name he likes. It is division or scattering. The Spirit alone gathers to Christ. The two things are as different as the unity of heaven and the scattering of earth.

All believers are one in the risen Christ; and the will of Christ is that that unity should be manifested to the whole world. How deeply and touchingly this is seen in the present intercommunings of the Son with the Father: "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE;" and again, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that THE WORLD MAY KNOW that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me" (John xvii.). Thus, instead of earthly divisions and discord, the blessed Lord would have us manifest to the world our oneness with Himself in glory. However we may have failed, I am not thereby excused from faithfulness to this risen Christ, and I cannot, therefore, be identified with anything that grieves Him, or is contrary to His mind. Sects and divisions have been shown to be utterly contrary to His will; therefore, I must separate from

them all, if I would walk according to God's Word. I can own no church but the One body; no principle of church government but that of the Holy Ghost; no name but that of the Lord Jesus Christ, alone head of the risen body, the Church of God.

The path may be difficult—but when was the path of faith easy? These are perilous times. Evil is called good; good evil; indifference neutrality, [A passage here could not be read in the scan.] "Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. v. 14).

To Those Gathered in His Name

I would add a few words, in conclusion, to those who are gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus, desiring, in everything, to be subject to the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Let us remember, beloved brethren, that God has gathered us together in the name of the Lord Jesus. That we have not met of our own will. That we have only to seek the glory of Christ, and to win souls to Him. Let us not be ashamed of His precious name, and the blessed place in which He has set us as witnesses of Him. Yea, let us rise as one man to make known the claims of Christ. But this can only be done in unshaken faith. There may be the name and form and not the power. When gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus, do we always expect the Spirit to testify of Him? If men go to hear an eloquent preacher, they expect to hear him. Do we thus expect the teaching of the Spirit of God by the Word? God is pleased to use gifts. I am not speaking of a blind impulse, or of what some call man's inward light.

No. I ask, do we really believe in the presence of the divine person of the Holy Ghost? Then let not one rise to deliver his own thought, ready prepared as it were, and let not the weakest say, I am not fit to be used of God. Let there be a real yielding of ourselves to God; to be kept silent, or used to speak the words He shall give—it may be but the reading of a verse of Scripture. Have we not often felt more of the real power of God's presence at such a time than we can possibly describe? How blessed to feel you are in His presence; to hear His words, as though He were speaking in an audible voice. Oh, may there be much fervent prayer that the guidance of the Spirit of God may be manifest—seen and felt in every gathering. Have faith, my brethren, in God.

To Those Still in the Sects

To my brethren who are still in the sects of men, whether Roman, Greek, English, Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian, of whatever name, let me earnestly entreat you to seek divine guidance in the Scriptures of truth. My confidence is in God that He will, by this feeble paper, lead many of you to own the name of the Lord Jesus, in unfeigned subjection to the Spirit of God. We may never know each other here; but when we meet around the throne, then we shall not regret having left every sect and every name, and having been gathered only in the name of the Lord Jesus. Do not suppose that I imply that the name of Jesus is not dear to all the children of God in the various divisions of the professing church. No; for to you who believe he is precious. But you are not gathered in His name alone, as the one body of Christ. Each sect has some other name, founded on some other principle, which hinders all the children of

God being gathered with them, in contrast to the true ground of being gathered by the Spirit of God to the name and person of Christ. In thus gathering there is no barrier to any or all the children of God walking in subjection to the Holy Ghost.

Nor can such a gathering or Assembly of God be truly called a sect, any more than the Assembly of God in the days of the apostles could.

Nor would I for a moment imply that my brethren in the various divisions deny the existence of the Holy Ghost. What I say is, that when you meet for worship or teaching you do not submit to the Holy Ghost, and allow Him to preside over the meeting, using whom He will, as in 1 Cor. xii. 11. You have departed from the Spirit's rule, and have set up human order; and thus one member is burthened, and the others become mere listeners. There is work for every member, according to the measure of grace. All cannot speak in public; but cannot God use the feeblest attempts—a word by the way? Yea, often the prayer of a poor man, filled with the Spirit, is more blest to the saints of God than the eloquence of an Apollos.

May the Lord Himself lead you into unfeigned subjection to the Holy Ghost, according to His blessed Word.

C. S.