

HAVE YE RECEIVED
THE
HOLY GHOST?

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THIRTEENTH EDITION.

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HAVE YE RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST?

I DESIRE to say a little about the coming of the Holy Ghost from heaven to take up His abode here, and to point out certain things stated in the word of God connected with His coming.

The Holy Ghost did not always dwell here. No doubt but what He wrought in souls from the beginning, and if any were born again from Abel onwards, as some surely were, it was by the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ too was in the prophets testifying of things to come, and holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (1 Peter i. 11; 2 Peter i. 21.)

But His coming to abide here is distinct from all that went before, and did not take place till the Lord Jesus had gone from earth, and was glorified in heaven.

Many Scriptures show this, more than can be quoted in this little book. It might be well, however, to produce an instance or two in proof of what we say.

If the last words of the Lord to His disciples in the gospel of John from chap. xiv. to chap. xvi. be read, you will find that He spoke to them time after time of the coming of another Comforter, who, unlike Himself, would abide with them for ever; and when their hearts were sorrowful, because of His being about to leave them, He said, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." (John xvi. 7.)

"If I go not away, the Comforter will not come." Weigh those words. Do they not distinctly teach that the coming of the Comforter depended on the going away of the Lord Jesus?

Again: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Mark now the interpretation of that saying in the verse that follows: "But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." (John vii. 37, 39.)

Attentively consider that passage, and then say whether it does not lead us to believe that the glorification of the Lord Jesus on high must first take place before the Holy Ghost would come.

And when assembled together with His disciples after His resurrection He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father which they had heard of Him. Moreover He told them that not many days from that time the promise would be fulfilled, and they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost. (Acts i.)

Between the opening of Acts, and the second chapter, we get the ascension of Christ. He who had been known on earth as Jesus of Nazareth, who was withal the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person, having by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. He was gone away from earth, and was glorified, and now the Holy Ghost could come.

And so He did; for "when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all

the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." (Acts ii. 1-4.)

Then was the promise of the Father fulfilled; then the other Comforter came, not to tarry for awhile and go away, as the Lord had done, but to abide with God's people *for ever*.

Of the Spirit's abiding presence the Lord's own words leave no room for doubt: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." (John xiv. 16.) Yes, *for ever*.

Though eighteen centuries have rolled away, and the saints of God have well-nigh forgotten that the Holy Ghost is here, yet here He abides for ever, as the Lord hath said. The world may resist Him, religious communities may quench Him, and the individual saint may grieve Him, yet here He is as truly, if not so manifestly, as when He first came down.

And if this be so, what mean these prayers, so often heard, for the pouring out

of the Holy Spirit? Do not those who make them, and those who "Amen" them, plainly declare that they are either in the dark as to the Spirit's continuing presence, or else do not believe it, though it is so clearly stated in Holy Scripture?

But some one may reply, "Did not the Lord say, 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?'"

He did; but bear in mind the Holy Spirit at that time had not come down to dwell here. I do not think you will find directions to pray for the Spirit after Pentecost; and though there are several prayers recorded in the Scriptures since then, you will look in vain for any mention of such a thing.

Before the Lord came in flesh there were some who looked for Him, as Luke ii. teaches. May be they often prayed for the Messiah to appear; but when He came, all such prayers ceased. The One they prayed for was there, in their very midst. So is it with the Holy Ghost.

We may rightly desire to be filled with the Spirit, to be kept from grieving the

Spirit, and so on; but to pray for the Spirit to be sent down is utterly unscriptural, and therefore wrong.

Do you doubt it? Then search, and see for yourself.

And if the Holy Ghost is here, in whom does He dwell?

The question is easily answered. "He shall be in you," said the Lord in John xiv. 17. "This spake He of the Spirit which *they that believe on Him* should receive." (John vii. 39.) "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." (Eph. i. 13.) "And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey Him." (Acts v. 32.) "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. vi. 19.)

These passages, which might be greatly multiplied, enable us to say beyond doubt who they are in whom the Holy Ghost dwells.

If the love of God is shed abroad in the believer's heart, it is by the Holy Ghost

given unto him. (Rom. v. 5.) If he knows that he is in relationship with God as a dear child, it is because God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into his heart, crying, Abba, Father. (Gal. iv. 6.) If he has the consciousness of his being in Christ and Christ in him, it is by the Spirit; for the Lord, in speaking of the day when the Holy Ghost should come, said, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." (John xiv. 20.) "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." (1 John iv. 13.)

The gracious work of the Spirit of God in the soul and His personal indwelling must be carefully distinguished. He wrought in us when unsaved and far from God, but only after we believed were we sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. (Eph. i. 13.) A man builds a house, and afterwards takes up his abode there. Who does not see that the building of the house, and the going to live in it after it is built, are not one and the same thing?

* * * * *

There is another thing connected with the coming of the Holy Ghost; viz., the formation of the Church.

Until the Church was formed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost there were but two classes in the world—Jews and Gentiles. Then there were three, all of which are named in one verse, which I will repeat: “Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God.” (1 Cor. x. 32.) These three are distinct, the one from the other.

The Church is very precious to Christ. She is the object of His peculiar love, nourished and cherished by Him, the pearl of great price, to obtain which He gave up all. (Matt. xiii. 46.)

In Ephesians v. 25–27 we have the actings of the love of Christ to the Church in three different ways—past, present, and future. “Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it.” That word takes us back to the cross. He gave *Himself* for it. Could He give more? His love for the Church is told in crimson streams, and pierced hands and side and feet. Verse 26 gives us the *present* actings of His love; He sanctifies and cleanses it with the washing of water by the Word; while verse 27 lets us see what will be done in a day that may not be far distant: He will “present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

It has been argued, that inasmuch as it is written—"Christ loved the Church," *therefore* every saved person from Adam to the end belongs to it, because loved by Him. I know not which is greater—the weakness of the argument or the unscripturalness of it. If a man loves his wife with a love suitable to such relationship, does that render him incapable of loving his children, parents, brothers, sisters, relatives, friends? or does it follow that because he loves these therefore all degrees of relationship cease, and that children, parents, brothers, sisters, relatives, and friends are in the same standing as his wife? The thought is folly.

From the closing verses of Ephesians i. we learn that Christ, as Man, having been raised from the dead, and set by God at His own right hand in the heavenly places, became head of His body—the Church. So also in Colossians i. 18: "Head of the body, the Church;" not before incarnation, not in humiliation here, not in resurrection, but in ascension glory. There could be no body formed on earth and united by the Holy Ghost to a Head in heaven till the Head was there.

If you had asked the Old Testament saints, yea, the most illustrious of them—

Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, whether they knew aught of being united to a man at the right hand of God in heaven, they would have stared at you in wonder. There was no man then at the right hand of God to be united to. He who is there as man now was ever in the bosom of the Father ; but it was only when He, having accomplished redemption on the cross, went up on high, and took His seat there, that the angels beheld for the first time a Man upon the throne of God.

Believer, that Man in glory has sent down the Holy Ghost according to His promise, not only to dwell in and with His saints, but to form them into one body, of which He Himself in heaven is the glorious Head.

The Church, looked at as a spiritual house being built by Christ, is composed only of living stones. *He* could build with none other. Seen as entrusted to man's hand to build, wood, hay, and stubble, alas ! enter into its composition. (1 Cor. iii. 10, 15.) Regarded as *a body*, it is formed alone of living members united to Christ by the Holy Ghost.

In this last aspect it is set forth in 1 Cor. xii. : "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." Remark, it is not said, so also is the Church, though the Church be the subject, but "so also is Christ." This is greatly to be noticed. The Head and the members are one, and the name of Christ covers the whole ; as a bride, when she becomes a wife, is covered by her husband's name.

"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. For the body is not one member, but many." Then Paul goes on to show that each member, however feeble, is necessary, and cannot be dispensed with. Were one member missing the body would be incomplete.

Before the cross there was "the middle wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile. God had fenced His earthly people off from the nations, so that when the apostle Peter went to Cornelius he said, "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation." (Acts x. 28.) That "wall of partition" was broken down by the cross, and now "of twain," that is, Jew and Gentile, God makes "one new man."

Jew and Gentile alike in condemnation, and alike in what grace does with them. Both brought into a position quite *new to either*—formed into one body by one Spirit, and united to the Head in heaven.

This is “the mystery * * which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men”—“the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God;” not hid in Old Testament Scriptures, but “hid in God”—a secret never revealed to the sons of men till God’s due time for making it known came round. (Eph. iii.)

“There is one body and one Spirit;” not many bodies, but *one*. To that body—the Church—every true believer belongs; he is a member of it, an eye, an ear, a hand or foot, according to God’s good pleasure. “Now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him.” (1 Cor. xii. 18.)

The Lord’s Supper sets forth the same truth. The broken bread on the table is indeed a symbol of the true body of His flesh given for us at Calvary, and the one loaf tells of that mystical body—the Church—of which we speak. (1 Cor. x. 17.)

No one can join the Church as if it were at his own option, whether he did so or not. He is joined to it if indeed he be a true believer. He cannot join that to which he is already joined, and of which he forms a necessary part. *God* sets the members in the body ; it is His act. The members do not set themselves there. (1 Cor. vi. 17 ; xii. 18.)

And in the first days of the Church's history she was manifestly one ; there was the visible expression of the "one body," a unity seen by all. The Lord prayed that His people may be one, that the world might believe. (John xvii. 21.) This oneness was not to be invisible, otherwise how could it help the world to believe ?

It has ever been Satan's aim to divide the saints of God, and thus hinder their keeping "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. iv. 3.) The wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep, though he cannot catch them out of the shepherd's hand. (John x.)

In the bosom of the Corinthian assembly the seeds of division were soon sown. They did not indeed divide themselves into different congregations. Outwardly

they were one, but inside Paul, Apollos, Cephas were made centres. Some said, "I am of Paul;" they liked his preaching, his masterly way of handling things. Others, "I am of Apollos." Paul was very good, but Apollos better; he was so eloquent. Others, "I am of Cephas;" he was so warm-hearted, so impetuous, and his words were like coals of fire. When news of this reached Paul's ear he sought to put it down with all his might. "Is Christ divided?" he indignantly and pathetically enquires. Who was Paul, and who Apollos? Simply servants by whom they had believed. Paul planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. He that plants is nothing, he that waters is nothing; but God who gives the increase is everything. "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. iii.)

And what was in germ in Paul's day has reached its mature development in ours. The existence of sects instead of being deplored is spoken of approvingly. Their presence, we are told, stirs up the spirit of

holy rivalry, and greater good is the result they say. They who speak thus appear wiser than Paul, who mourned over what they rejoice in—wiser than the Lord, who prayed that His people might be one, and who died to “gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.” (John xi. 52.) So the *external* Church is a broken, shattered, ruined thing, each section having its own order of ministry and rules of government, not drawn from the Scriptures certainly; for if rules are found there they must be for the whole Church, and not for a part. And all this goes on without the least suspicion in the mind of many that the whole thing is clean contrary to the truth.

Were a stranger, knowing nothing of sectarianism, to arrive in your town, and enquire for the Church of God, where would you direct him? Judge of his surprise at your being unable to satisfy his enquiry, and at your telling him that, though there were many of God’s dear children there, they went under different names to distinguish them from each other—some calling themselves Wesleyans, others Primitives, others Methodist New Connection, others Methodist Free Church, others Bible Christians, others Baptists,

others Calvinists, others Congregationalists, others Church of England, and so on. Might he not in his bewilderment ask, "Is Christ divided?"

Where indeed would the Church of God be with such confusion all around? Could any one of the sects say, "We are the Church of God"? I reply, "If you had a jug, and let it fall on the hard granite, and it broke into pieces, could either of the pieces say, 'I am the jug'?"

No; if you wished to find the Church of God in your town, you must call together all the true believers in it; and when you had them together you could say, "These form the Church of God here."

Yet this company, composed only and of all the truly saved people in the town, might, and would, degenerate into a mere party were it to set about framing rules for its guidance other than those already laid down in the word of God, and which should govern the Church of God everywhere throughout the wide world.

As to names, I would utterly refuse a name that did not equally belong to every believer in every place. Call me by what

name you please as long as it is one given by God to *all* His children, and I will gladly respond to it; but I do and must decline to accept a name that belongs less to my fellow-believers than to me. It would be the badge of a sect, and the denial that there is but "one body."

It is the custom nowadays for the various sects to meet together for united prayer at the beginning of the year for a certain number of days, during which they consent to sink their differences, and show to the world a picture of so-called Christian union. I have sometimes said, "But if your differences are of God it is a very serious thing to lay them aside for seven days, and if they are not of God, why take them up again? If union for seven days is so good, why not for seventy times seven?"

We have not to seek union on a human basis, but to endeavour to keep "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"—a unity which the Holy Ghost has already formed, and within which no membership is owned but that of the "one body," no name acknowledged but the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ—a unity in the midst of which the Holy Spirit is free to act according to the pattern of 1 Cor. xiv.,

and to preserve which there must be the maintenance of discipline in keeping with the holiness of God's house.

* * * *

When the Lord Jesus Christ ascended up on high we are told that He gave gifts unto men. (Eph. iv.): "He gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." *He* gave them, they come from Him. Man, or any number of men, cannot give them; the gift must come from the Giver, and the bestowal of gift carries with it the responsibility to use it.

If the great Head of the Church, in the exercise of His sovereignty, bestows the gift of teacher, pastor, or evangelist on one of His own, be he polished gentleman or ploughman in the fields, is that Christian responsible to use the gift or not? Or before he dares do so is he to wait till he has passed through college, or receives permission of man to preach, teach, or care for the sheep and lambs of Christ's flock? Does not the reception of the gift lay the receiver under the solemn obligation to employ that gift to the end for which it was given?

When it pleased God to call by His grace Saul of Tarsus, afterwards Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ, and to reveal His Son in him, that He might preach Him among the Gentiles, we learn, from Gal. i., that immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went he up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before him; but “straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.” (Acts ix. 20.)

Do you reply, “But we have rules of our own, and don’t suffer things to be done in that way in our society, or connexion, or body, or church, or whatever it may please you to call it?” Be it so, but do your rules do away with the truth of God upon these subjects? And more: when you speak of your society or your church it is evident you speak not of the Church of God; for how can the word “*your*” or “*our*” be justly used in reference to that?

If you take the ground of being a society originally formed by the State, or by some good man whose name you bear, and claim the right to frame what rules you please, or empower others to do so for you, I have nothing to say. But then, what about the Church of God, to which you belong, if

indeed you do belong to it? Have you lost sight of that, and your membership of it, and thus become content to be a member of a society governed by regulations peculiar to itself, or by Acts of Parliament?

Were Paul among us to-day, labouring in the ministry of the Word, would he be admitted into the ranks of the clergy, or be considered a lay help? a regular preacher, with the privilege of having "reverend" affixed to his name, or only "a local"? In the face of his emphatic assertion that he was an apostle, "not of men, neither *by* man" (Gal. i.), you could scarcely expect to persuade him to ask authority to preach at the hands of one man or any number of men. It might be that he would make tents for a living, as at times he did (Acts xviii. 3; xx. 34); and then, of course, his status would be fixed; for who does not know that it would be beneath the dignity of clergy and ordained ministers to labour thus? he could be but a lay help or local preacher!

And the apostle would be excluded from many of your pulpits, not because of lack of gift or call from God, but on account of his apostleship being neither of nor by men—Paul shut out, while the most

determined opponent of Paul's doctrine might be received in virtue of his having been duly authorized by those who are supposed to be in authority.

Nor can any reason be shown from Scripture why a blacksmith working at his forge, a carpenter at his bench, a clerk at a merchant's desk or banker's counter, or anyone belonging to the learned professions should not follow his calling and yet be a very able evangelist, pastor, or teacher. Gift conferred by the Lord does not, for the most part, oblige the man who has it to abandon his daily work. I say for the most part, as not laying down a rule which admits of no exceptions.

"Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges?" Paul asks in 1 Cor. ix. Hath not the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel? Undoubtedly He has. Who shall deny Him His right to set a man free from every other occupation that he might go hither and thither on His errands; and surely if a man be thus called and fitted by Him, He will care for that man and those dependent on him. Only let the man go forth on his high mission convinced that the Lord hath called him, and trusting God

for daily bread, not looking to his brethren nor to any human source for support, but to God. Have we not the same God to do with as Paul and others had? and are not all ways and means at His disposal? The silver and the gold are His, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. And let him remain in a town just as long, and no longer, than he believes his Lord would have him, and let him look up for guidance, and he will surely get it. He must not be afraid if his faith in God is tested. Paul knew what it was to be abased and to abound, to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need; and he adds, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv.)

Say you, "We should never get ministers on that principle; few would have courage to walk in such a path." Perhaps so; but we may thank God there are at least a few raised up and called by Him who have learnt to walk in that path, and to serve Him. And is He not able to send out others who shall follow the faith of those early preachers of the truth, of whom the Spirit of God witnesseth. "For His name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles"? (3 John 7.)

So many pulpits to fill, and therefore so many preachers must be had to fill them. But suppose the evangelists, teachers, and pastors that Christ gives do not reach that number, what then? Or what if He gives more? Must the requisite number be made up somehow? or if there are too many, have they to stand aside till there are vacancies to fill?

Where is the money to come from to keep all this agoing? To what humiliating straits are you driven to provide it. It seems to matter but little where or how got as long as it is had. The pew rents raised, and the poorer members of your congregations called upon to give up their seats, and make room for richer folks; while sittings in some inferior part of the building are allotted to those who can pay the least. Repeated collections, no matter what unclean hand puts a shilling in the plate. Bazaars, singing entertainments, teas, popular lectures, prominent preachers to deliver anniversary sermons, all to get money; for money you must have, or your religious machinery will stop.

Oh, it is sorrowful to have to speak of these things; to draw aside the covering, and show these festering sores! Chris-

tianity as a system has indeed grown into a great tree, and "the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches of it."

Is it not to such a state of things that Paul alludes in his second epistle to Timothy? "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. 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." (2 Tim. ii. 20, 21.)

Believer, is your conscience uneasy when you soberly think of your religious associations, and the things that go on in connection with them? Perhaps you have lifted up your voice against this or that, but others have carried the day. They have pleaded that unless such things were allowed, the congregation would fall off, and "the cause" go down, and such pleas have prevailed. Yes, that is it; the congregation must be held together. Let it be done by the usual methods if you can; but if not, then have recourse to other means. Doing evil that good may come?

Is it seriously believed that more real good is done by departing from the word of God in the least degree than in cleaving closely to it? You may secure thereby what *seems* to be present advantage, but in the long run it must end in spiritual blight, desolation, and ruin

Do you enquire what you should do? To that question I would earnestly and affectionately reply, that you are solemnly responsible to the Lord to purge yourself from everything contrary to His holy word and name. To protest against evil and yet remain in alliance with it is to pronounce your own condemnation. Are there no Christians near you whose hearts and minds have been exercised as to these things, and who have by God's mercy taken their stand apart from these evils that afflict His people? Are there none who, weary of sectarianism and party names, have been led to gather only to the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ? None who, seeing there is "One Body" to which all God's people belong, and only one, have retired from that which practically denies it, and are "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"? (Eph. iv.) None who believe it to be the privilege of God's

saints to come together to break bread on the first day of the week in remembrance of their once-crucified, but now glorified, Lord, and accordingly do so? None who believe that ministry is a divine institution, and own the sovereign rights of the Lord to bestow His gifts on whom He will, and turn away from the schemes, plans, and interferences of man? If there be such then let that be your company. Most likely they will be evil spoken of—called narrow and exclusive, while in reality they have left the narrow paths of religious tradition and returned to the broad ground of the Church of God. Thought to be bound by rigid rules, because they are seldom, if ever, seen in the unscriptural associations from whence they came out, while in truth the only thing that binds them is the word of God, and their desire to be obedient to it. Be content to suffer reproach for His name's sake, and to be misunderstood. Add to your faith courage, and it shall have a present as well as an everlasting reward.

And if there be none such as we have described, then stand alone, and be much with God in secret. Peradventure He will soon give you the fellowship of another of His children, and then you can look

up together for guidance. "The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way." (Ps. xxv. 9.) And forget not, that where *two* or three are gathered to His name, be it in a kitchen or a barn, there He is in the midst. You may enjoy the privilege of breaking bread together if the Lord lead to it; for it needs no gifted person to minister at His table, much less is it an official act, and let it be remembered that the same divine principles that govern an assembly numbering hundreds equally apply to an assembly composed of the smallest possible number.

Finally, forget not that preaching and ministry of the Word are not necessarily connected with the gathering together of the Lord's people to "break bread." The latter may go on without ministry at all, and the souls thus gathered be richly blessed with the presence of Christ in their midst. Ability to minister comes from the exalted Head of the Church, as we have seen, and He may be pleased to raise up among you those who will prove a real help, or He may send such there. Learn to trust Him. Do not look about for crutches, but lean on an unseen arm. Christ loves the Church, and evangelists,

pastors, teachers for the work of the ministry and the edifying of His body He will still give, and He can easily send such into your neighbourhood if it be His pleasure. But without these the Lord's people are privileged to be gathered to His name as members of the "One Body" to eat the Lord's Supper. The Lord in the midst, the one and only president, and His right acknowledged to lead the praises of His gathered saints by whom He will.



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