

THE BODY OF CHRIST VERSUS THE BABYLON OF CHRISTENDOM

By Maurice M. Johnson

“After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, ceased not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He 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 (age), but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:15-23).

“Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ...For Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (II Corinthians 11:1-3 & 14,15).

“And He (Christ) is the Head of the body, the church...whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to Me for you, to fulfill (complete) the Word of God; even the mystery (secret) which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily” (Colossians 1:18, 25-29).

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts (desires) shall they heap to themselves teachers (call and hire their ‘pastors and teachers’), having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (II Timothy 4:3,4).

Emmanuel's Body

While living on earth in His own sinless, physical body, the Lord Jesus was Emmanuel, “which being interpreted is ‘God with us’” (Matt. 1:23). Now that He is no longer on earth with that individual, physical body, but has returned to the glory to become “Head over all things to the church which is His body,” He is no longer called “Emmanuel.” This does not mean, however, that He is no longer “with us.” He is now very surely and just as powerfully “in the world but not of it” (John 17:12,14), as He was during those thirty years when He was living the quiet, private, law-keeping life of a son of David, “made of a woman, made under the Law” (Gal. 4:4); and His presence in and through “the church which is His body” is now just as SUPER-natural and UN-earthly as was His mighty and majestic three and a half years’ public ministry after His water baptism and wilderness temptations.

While gratefully recognizing the revealed fact that our Savior and Lord is “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8), honest believers will gladly allow their Lord to tell them of His “other ages” (Eph. 3:5), His “sundry times and divers (different) manners” (Heb. 1:1), and “divers washings (baptisms)” (Heb. 9:10). Only Satanic confusion can result when we fail to “distinguish things that differ” (lit. translation—Philip. 1:10), or fail to diligently and consistently obey the Divine command to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15).

The Church—Christ's Body

No Christian would ever be in a denomination if he had spiritual understanding of the word “henceforth” as used in II Corinthians 5:16,17. “Wherefore *henceforth* know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now *henceforth* know we Him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature (creation): old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.” For thirty-three years Christ was known on earth as “Jesus of Nazareth,” a “Jew,” “made of a woman, made under the Law” (John 4:9; Rom. 9:3; John 19:19; Gal. 4:4): *but now* He has been “made Head over all things to the church which is His body” and all believers in this dispensation, “being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Rom. 12:4,5).

Known By Its 'Fruit' !

Since this is the “new creation in Christ Jesus,” it is beautifully consistent that we, as living members of the church which is Christ’s body, should be known by the fruit of our new SPIRITUAL life and *not* by anything that distinguishes us PHYSICALLY. Christ said: “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if you have love one to another’ (John 13:35). “And above all these things put on charity (love), which is the bond of perfectness” (Col. 3:14). “For by their *fruits* shall ye know them ...A corrupt tree cannot bring forth *good fruit*...For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins which were by the Law, did work in our members to bring forth *fruit* unto death...But *the fruit of the Spirit* is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: *against such there is no law*” (Matt. 7:17-20; Rom. 7:5; Gal. 5:22,23).

As we thus “walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16), and “Walk in the light as He is in the light” (I John 1:7), we will undoubtedly be known by our fruit, which is (in that case) *not ours*. It is “the fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22). Now this is merely another way of expressing the fact that the believer’s life is “hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3) and the “life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God” (Gal. 2:20) for “it is not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20). In this sense, we may say that the poor Christ-rejecting world has no Emmanuel (God with us) except “the church which is Christ’s body.” And what a solemn as well as glorious fact it is that we who are saved are actually Emmanuel’s body, the only building in which God dwells on earth. Think of it! All true, heart believers in the Lord Jesus Christ in this present church dispensation “are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:19-22 & I Cor. 6:19,20).

“Filthy Rags” For Banners

In the light of these sublime truths which warm the hearts of all lovers of the Lord Jesus, how *shocking* and *blasphemous* is this common practice of naming a man-made sect “Emmanuel Church,” “Emmanuel Mission,” etc. A popular “Fundamentalist” radio preacher in Springfield, Mo., has a cheap little airplane that he named “The Good Ship Emmanuel.” Yet there are evidently hundreds of his supporters who are so unspiritual (see I Cor. 2:12-16) that they have seen nothing of the contemptible idolatry and profanity of his having thus “taken the name of the Lord in vain.” The shallowness with which most Christians judge would be demonstrated if I were to paint on my car some such name as this, “The Good Chevy Jesus Christ,” for there isn’t a real Christian anywhere who wouldn’t think me stupidly profane. But how many think the “successful” flying “radio parson” is all of that when he applies another one of the titles of the Son of God to his plane? (See John 7:24 & Matt. 7:1-5—Note well verse 5. Floyd Hitchcock is his name. See also I Tim. 5:20,21 & Gal. 2:11-14.)

Oh, why aren’t we, not merely willing but, altogether thrilled to be known ONLY by the supernatural fruit of the Holy Spirit? Why do we confuse the minds of unbelievers by seeking to use our own fleshly minds and our “filthy rags” of Adamic righteousness in order in order to add to our completeness in Christ? We always “walk as men” and are carnal when we think we can “do more good for God” by adding to “the fruit of the Spirit.” See I Cor. 3:1-4. When we are spiritually aware of the fact that “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” in God’s sight, but that in His great love wherewith He loved us, God has made Christ to “be unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” we will very surely strive to keep our miserable “old man” constantly crucified that we may show forth Christ in us “the hope of Glory” (I Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:27,28; 3:9-17 & Eph. 4:22).

Instead of the imposing and soulishly attractive sights that sectarian banners and denominational doing present to our physical eyes, we should see “the old man” on parade, staggering along in various degrees of intoxication, proudly waving “filthy rags” of his own righteousness (sectarian names and plans and organizations) as he heads toward the final sordid festivities of “Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth” (Rev. 17:5). And we would see proud Christendom in that, her true character, had we not become “corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” and blinded by “the traditions of the elders” (Matt. 15:1-13).

Christ Our Banner !

“Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah” (Psalm 60:4). “We will rejoice in Thy salvation, and in the name of our God will we set up our banners” (Psalm 20:5). “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful...And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him” (Col. 3:15-17). What Godly act could ever require the name Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Fundamentalist or such like? My Christian friend, this is an honest and sober question. *I plead with you not to throw it off lightly.* Answer it in the light of the three passages given just above and many other such throughout the Word of God. Please, for God’s sake and for your own soul’s sake, don’t close your Bible and slavishly go to “Dr. this” and “Dr. that” or to even your own dear father and mother. *Only Christ is your LORD.*

“Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord has spoken” (Jer. 13:15). “And he that is of God heareth God’s Word” (John 8:47). “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name...O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together” (Psalm 29:2 & 34:3). When Paul was living the “not I, but Christ” life, was he living the Methodist life? Is the new life in Christ Jesus a Presbyterian life? Is the fruit of the Spirit Northern or Southern Baptist fruit? When I am “filled with all the fullness of God” is that Fundamentalist fullness? The Holy Spirit within every saved soul cries out NO! Shall we grieve and quench this Blessed indwelling Comforter Who came to make Christ real and precious to us? He came to glorify Christ. He will not glorify our inventive ability and our subtle desire to escape “the scandal of the cross” by doing “the work of the Lord” in a name that is more attractive to the world than Christ’s—Him Whom the world hates and crucifies afresh every day. Shame, oh shame, on us!

God’s Embarrassing Classifications

“But” you say, “most of the best Christians I have ever known lived and died having used the name Methodist, or Baptist, or Episcopalian, or Lutheran, or Nazarene or ‘Christian’ (‘Disciples’) or some other such man-chosen name for their organization.” What has that got to do with “Thus saith the Lord”? Those same “dear Christians” likewise did other things that are plainly and frequently condemned in the Word of God as being “works of the flesh,” such as “wrath, strife, envyings, etc.” You do not wink at those “works of the flesh” merely because you have known Christians who at times were guilty of them, do you? Did you know that God lists all denominations (variances) and all sects (“heresies”) in exactly the same class with murder and adultery and idolatry? See Gal. 5:19-21.

Only impudent unbelief will belittle this startling revelation—that God lists our “beautiful denominational variances” as merely outworkings of our “old man,” our sinful Adamic nature. And it cannot be disputed by an honest man that, while some of the LOST members of Adam’s race are willing to be known as drunkards, others prefer to be known as respectable members of some “heresy” (sect). For it is a sickening fact that all any person needs to be and do in order to become a Baptist, or Methodist or Fundamentalist or any other kind of sect-joiner is merely to claim to believe and be what the laws of that particular denomination call for. In fact (now read carefully) the only part

of a Christian that can be a Baptist or Methodist or Fundamentalist, etc., is that Christian's old nature, "the old man" that we are repeatedly commanded to "put off." It almost seems like a shame for a Christian "put off" on the Baptists his old nature, doesn't it? Make no mistake about it, the regenerated inner man is not denominational or sectarian and cannot possibly "belong to" this or that or any other man-made institution. "Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's...Be ye not the servants of men" (I Cor. 6:19,20 & 7:23).

"The Way" or A Way ?

"I am *the way, the truth, and the life*; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways (note the plural) of death" (Prov. 14:12 & 16:25). Thank God there are no divisions, no dissolution and no death to "*the way*," while "the end" of all of man's ways "are the ways of death." The various sects and denominations (whether popish, modernistic or fundamental) are NOTHING but man's ways of doing what they call "*God's work*." And while God condemns their presumptuous inventions, their sects and schisms and schemes, He nevertheless honors and blesses the new natures of His children and He blesses His Word even when wrongfully and "unequally yoked together with unbelievers." However, the believers, themselves, are positively commanded to "come out from among them, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" (II Cor. 6:14-7:1). It is only as we obey His loving, though stern command, and "go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" that we can ever know Him "in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings" (Heb. 13:12,13; Philip. 3:10 & II Tim. 2:19-21).

The Fruit of The Spirit

Have you ever noticed the plural and the singular in the expressions, "works of the flesh *are*..." and "the fruit of the Spirit *is*..."? "Works," plural—divisions. "Fruit," singular—unity. Works are...Fruit is... Oh, that you and I would never forget that all our "old man" can possibly do is what God calls "the works of the flesh," the vile outworkings of our fallen natures, "dead in trespasses and in sins." But when we "mortify our members," reckon ourselves dead to the Law and to the "old man," we will repudiate all "dead works" and "walk in the Spirit" so that we can bear "the fruit of the Spirit" to the glory of our gracious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All fleshly distinctions between God's children will cease, so far as we are concerned, for we will then "*Know no man after the flesh*."

"The Scandal Of The Cross"

Immediately after cutting the last sectarian string that had bound me to literally thousands of "Fundamentalist friends" I became keenly aware of "the scandal of the cross," but blessed be God, I was comforted by the ever present Comforter. And it was while riding a bus away from the last sectarian convention I ever attended as a fellow-member that the following words came to me. Amidst almost blinding tears of disappointment at the unexpected "cold shoulders" and rejection that my plea for unity had caused, I jotted down some of the deep yearnings of my heart. That was over fifteen years ago and some of my prayerful requests are being definitely answered. God grant

that my musings on that bus may be a blessing to some other lover of Christ who has a lonely heart (humanly speaking) because of having shown more loyalty to Christ than to Christendom. Here they are:

POORER YET RICHER

*I've less to lean on, Lord, today
Than e'er I've had—less of clay.*

*I'm lonelier, Lord, than ever I've been,
With less of friendship---less of men.*

*I'm weaker, Lord, with some alarm.
My strength is going—the strength of arm.*

*But, with less of clay, men, friends, and might,
I have more of Thee, more joy, more light.*

*Lord, let me suffer, so much I need
To mortally wound my pride and greed.*

*I long to know, Thou Savior, Dear,
Thy lonely path; Thy way so drear.*

*I want to feel with flesh laid bare
The taunts and jeers Thou sufferedst there.*

*O may I know this proud world's scorn
Till celestial yearnings in me are born!*

*Detach me, Lord, I fain would be
Closer drawn and joined to Thee.*

*Allow no comforts, friends nor fame
To lessen the beauty of Thy Dear Name.*

*If earth-born ties too taut have grown,
Break them, Lord, I'm Thine alone.*