

[STEM Publishing: The writings of C. H. Mackintosh](#): "There is one body"

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Psalm 93; 1 Corinthians 3: 16; 1 Corinthians 6: 19

C. H. Mackintosh.

These scriptures set forth a truth which I believe to be of cardinal importance to every one of us, individually as well as corporately: the Church as a whole is the temple of God; and every believer is made such as really, as literally, as absolutely as the temple of old in which God dwelt, only, of course, in a different way. He dwells in each individual believer. Mark that fact; ponder it. It is not a question of opinion; it is God's truth. If people do not bow to Scripture, it is of no use to argue with them.

The truth presented here is not one about which you may think this or that. *God has a house here on the earth.* Take in that fact beloved; ponder it. Do not say it is what we *ought* to be, but what we *are*; and then see the conduct that flows from it; see what becomes God's house: "Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, for ever."

This is the basis of the truth which underlies all discipline from the time that God had a house on earth. We never hear a word about God dwelling with man until redemption is accomplished. But the moment that Israel is out of Egypt, on the shore of the Red Sea, the first note that falls on our ear from the lips of a redeemed people is: "I will prepare Him a habitation." And the moment the last pin is put into the earthly tabernacle, the glory of God comes down to take up His abode in the midst of His people.

But His presence demands and secures holiness. Read Joshua 6 & Joshua 7, and see how we get there two grand consequences of the self-same presence: Jericho in ruins, and the heap of stones in the valley of Achor. One man dared to defile the assembly of God! How solemn it is! It was a fine thing to see those bulwarks crumbling to dust beneath the feet of God's people. But mark: the same presence that laid Jericho in ruins could not allow that one man's sin to escape notice. The Holy Ghost has penned these records for us, and it is our bounden duty to hang over them; and to seek to drink into our souls the instruction in them.

The very instincts of faith ought to have taught Joshua that there was some hindrance. God's people were His habitation. That fact gave them a characteristic which marked them off from every other nation upon earth. No other nation knew aught of that great privilege but Israel. But God is God; He will be true to Himself; He will take care of His great name. Joshua thought the glory of that great name was involved: but there are more ways than one to maintain that glory.

If Jehovah is present to give victory over His enemies, He is also present to discipline His people. "Israel hath sinned!" God does not say, One man has sinned — find him out. No; it is the six hundred thousand of Israel, because Israel is one nation; one Divine Presence in their midst stamped and marked and formed their unity. Do not try to reason about it, brethren, but bow down your whole moral being to that truth. Do not judge it, but let it judge you. "Israel hath sinned;" that is the reason why they could not get the victory. And Israel must come up man by man, so that he who has transgressed the covenant of Jehovah may be taken. God cannot go on with unjudged evil. Weakness is no hindrance, wickedness is. Can God lend the sanction of His presence to evil? Never! If we are God's dwelling-place, we must be holy. This is one of those eternal principles which can never be given up.

But the question is raised: How could it be said that Israel had sinned? Six hundred thousand innocent people! The answer is, *the nation is one*, and that unity has to be maintained and confessed.

In Leviticus 24 we read, that twelve loaves were placed on the golden table before the Lord continually, with the seven lamps of the golden candlestick to throw their light upon them. The end of the same chapter shows us a man brought outside the camp, where all Israel is to stone him with stones. Why this grouping of passages? It is full of meaning. The grouping of Scripture is among some of its brightest glories; the very way in which the Holy Ghost groups His materials commands our attention. Every fact, every circumstance tends to illustrate its infinite depths and its moral glories.

Why, then, do we find this connection in Leviticus? For the simple purpose of illustrating this great principle: faith's power to grasp the eternal truth of Israel's unity, and to confess it in the face of everything — a magnificent, practical truth. There is first the divine side: what Israel was in God's mind; and then, what Israel might become under God's discipline. And it ever behoves the faithful company to confess and maintain the original truth of God, even in the midst of the ruin around. I earnestly, urgently press the necessity as from God today, to maintain the great truth of the unity of the body of Christ as that which we have to hold, maintain, and confess in the face of everything.

Elijah on mount Carmel, when the kingdom was divided, called for twelve stones with which to build the altar. But Israel is no longer twelve tribes, it might be said; Israel's unity is broken and gone. No; it is an indissoluble unity, a unity which is never to be surrendered. Israel is twelve while God's eye rests on the twelve loaves on the golden table, on the twelve stones in Aaron's breast-plate. Faith holds fast that truth, and Elijah builds his altar of twelve stones. The unity is never to be given up, though it may be like a chain flung across a river, with the tide flowing over it, so that you cannot see it. The Church was one on the day of Pentecost; it will be one in the glory; and it is as true to day that there is one body and one Spirit, as it was when the Holy Ghost penned the fourth of Ephesians. How is this unity formed? By the Holy Ghost; it is union with the Man at the right hand of God.

Thus I get three substantial reasons for a life of holiness: I am not to dishonour Him to whom I am united; I am not to grieve the Spirit by whom I am united; and I am not to grieve the members to whom I am united.

I feel responsibility to urge this truth upon you. Let not the devil cheat you of the blessing of walking in it. See that you realize its formative, influential power. Think how your state and walk at this moment are affecting the saints elsewhere. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." All Israel was affected by Achan's sin. He thought nobody saw, nobody knew, and quietly hid the forbidden thing in his tent. If this is your state, there is a complete stoppage at once: there is no more power put forth on your behalf by God; there is power truly, but power not to act for you in victory, but to act towards you in discipline; power to smash you to pieces.

Let us not measure the Word of God by our consciences, or by our sensibilities, but in simplicity believe what it says. We read that there is one Spirit uniting every member to the Head in glory, and uniting every single member on the earth to every other. In this body a saint out of communion is like a waster in a candle; he affects his fellow-saints. Confess this great truth, own it simply, whatever the condition. Never deny it, never give it up. You say, Brethren are smashed up! I answer, I am not to be occupied with brethren, but with the truth of God. Take your eyes off brethren, and fix them on the truth of God. Are you conscientiously gathered on the ground of the one body? I speak freely and pointedly to you, because I believe this truth is assailed. In 1848 the Head was assailed — the Person of Christ. In 1882 I feel that the truth of the one body is assailed. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," and is joined to all who belong to Him. There is no such thing as independence in the Word of God. The assembly in one place is the corporate local expression of the Church of God, as we saw of the twelve tribes of Israel in the Old Testament.

This truth, like a golden thread, shines from cover to cover in the Book of God, and is always known to faith. Why did Daniel pray towards Jerusalem? The house of God was not there to the eye of man; but it was there to faith. Faith still recognising it prays towards it, though the lions' den be its reward.

Again, when Paul was before Agrippa, the nation scattered among all peoples from one end of the earth to the other, but Paul will speak of "the promise unto which our twelve tribes hope to come:" and the noun is in the singular (*dodecaphulon*). Could Paul have *shown* them?

And are you going to give up the unity of the Church of God? Are you going to have to do with things got up by the devil to cast dust in the eyes of Gods saints, and to hide from the mind the everlasting supreme truth of the one body? Is the body of Christ a little society based upon certain principles? How can you talk "joining" anything? If you are converted to Christ, all the "joining" is done! you are "added to the Lord;" you are part of that which man cannot touch for a moment; no one can cut off one single member of the body of Christ, which, according to the eternal purpose of God, and according to the operation of the Holy Ghost, is united to Him.

There is no need to organise this body. No, thank God, it is not man's work at all. The Holy Ghost came down at Pentecost to form it, and here it is still. And when our Lord Jesus comes to take it to the glory, it will be "the holy city, the new Jerusalem, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband," in which He will show forth "the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."