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"OUR HOUSE"

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. 5:1-2

From a not hasty but careful perusal of the Scriptures, we are satisfied that the view generally taken of this passage, (with the context) by the nominal church, hitherto, is erroneous.

This may seem somewhat immodest; we do not so intend. If we have any light it is *received*, not inherent in us, "that is in our flesh dwelleth no good thing." If we have apprehended the truth, it is because "He, the spirit of truth," leads us, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2:14. The Church is not to blame for not seeing before; how can one be expected to see in the night anything more than the outlines of the landscape; but now the day dawns, "let us not sleep, as do others," 1 Thes. 5:6.

The prophets uttered some things which they did not fully understand and which it was not necessary they should fully understand, because they were for us; 1 Peter 1:10-12.

But about this matter, Paul says (as mouth-piece for the Church), "we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved we have a (singular number) building of God, a house not made with hands, etc.

Paul was writing to the Corinthians here, but he was also writing "to all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both *theirs* and *ours*." 1 Cor. 1:2. The word "theirs" refers evidently to Jews. Paul was a Jew, Acts 21:39, but he styles himself "the Apostle of the Gentiles," Rom. 11:13; so in harmony with the latter he could in this dedication of his epistle say, "both theirs and ours" to the new Church, which was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. They (the Jews) stood aloof from the Gospel and were enemies of the cross of Christ; thus standing at a distance, the term "theirs," although Paul was a Jew, was appropriate to them, and converts

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from both could be very appropriately called "theirs and ours." Now, to such he says, "We know

that if our earthly house of this tabernacle (to which so many precious promises have been made) were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands." It may seem strange to us that the old house of Israel should not be able to see the typical nature of their ceremonies, and that "whatever is to be on the higher or spiritual plane, is brought to view first on the plane of the flesh," but though God had been speaking "by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began," of a restitution, they did not see that there was to be, in its application to them, a time of dissolution, before the time of restitution; and it seems that the Gospel Church in Paul's time, needed to be admonished of the danger of looking at that which is seen, forgetting that "that which is seen (by mortal eye) is temporal."

He had to combat that tendency, as in Galatians 3:3. "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God."

The "tabernacle of David is fallen down," but God in his good time will rebuild it; but those who are "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," have the power or privilege of becoming sons of God, and together will constitute *the house* of God; not the house of Moses nor the house of David (after the flesh) nor any other house but the house of God eternal.

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider

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the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His house, for this Man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who hath builded the house, hath more honor than the house." ...

And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant; what for? "for a testimony of those things which were to come after. "But Christ as a son over his own house, whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Heb. 3:1-6.

Now, no matter if the earthly house of our tabernacle, "whether of David or the Gospel, be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.

We have here a thought suggested by the word dissolve, which is in harmony with the prophecy of Malachi 3:3. "And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver." We have often heard this referred to and the manner of the refiner watching the melting of the precious metal until he can see his own image reflected, as an

illustration of God's dealing with each of His children, all of which is very beautiful and truthful, but there is in this expression "dissolved," and yet existing after a still deeper thought that impresses us.

The refiner of silver often finds impurities clinging to his silver after it has passed through the hottest fire; then he dissolves it: after the application of certain chemicals, silver and gold will dissolve in water. A person unacquainted with the process would say there was no silver in the water, though the water were full of it; the water appears as before—a little discolored if the silver was impure—otherwise as clear as if it were not there, and the refiner can cause a restitution of that silver to a pure and permanent form and more beautiful than before; he puts into that water an agent, (an influence) that causes the water to let go of it, and the silver in fine particles goes together by itself, no longer "dissolved" or "suspended." Then the refiner, to complete the work of restitution, puts it in the fire again; thus it "receives from his hand double" for all its impurity.

Now, in prophetic language, waters represent sometimes people and sometimes afflictions. Has not the earthly house, "both theirs and ours," passed, and are they not passing through such waters? Have "they" not been dissolved and "ours" (the nominal Church) being dissolved? No matter; "we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God." So Paul could say to the Corinthians and the Galatians, who were fearing lest they should not be connected in some way with the earthly house, that it was a matter of minor importance—all it was for was a type and stepping-stone to something higher and better.

Some may say, this is "far fetched," but we have fetched it only from the prophet Malachi, and made what seems to us the only true application, and it seems to make perfect harmony with all other Scripture. We have been held entranced hour after hour as we have compared Scripture with Scripture and found beautiful harmony with this view all through the word, and thank the Lord for it.

We would not be understood as saying that the word, *body and house*, are never applied to our physical bodies, for it not unfrequently is, and we think it is so used in the 10th verse of this chapter, though we do not feel over-positive about it lest it might refer to the different organizations, that shall finally be "gathered together in one," for we hope that the Methodist body, the Baptist body and the Presbyterian body (all of which are called bodies by their own authorities) will form, if not the body of Christ, yet the "household of God;" and we know that "we must all (all these different bodies) stand before the judgment seat of Christ (when and where?); that every one may "give an account of the things done in his body"—no, "that every one may receive the things done in his body." [*His*, is in italics in our Bibles.]

Perhaps some one is ready to ask, "How do you harmonize it with the 8th verse?" We would say, that the apostle (Col. 3:3), though speaking of our death to sin, tells us where our life is (whether our physical bodies are dead or alive, makes no difference,) from the time of begetting onward, our "life is hid with Christ in God" until "He, who is our Life, shall appear," then the earnest expectation of the creature [who is the creature but the one who has no spiritual life, the outside world], "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God" will be realized and the "sons of God" will be recognized. Till then we shall not be able to find out what God has hidden.

Then, when we are born again,

"BORN BY A NEW CELESTIAL BIRTH,"

we shall have life in ourselves and together constitute the "building of God," the "house not made with hands." Dear brethren, how near and dear the relation we sustain to each other—"Builded together for the habitation of God." J. C. S.

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— *January, 1881* —



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