

equally plain that wherever the gift was possessed an unlimited freedom, subject to Scripture order for its exercise, was given; or rather, the obligation, in grace, for its exercise was imposed.

This question of ministry is not to be summarily settled by the assertion that the 12th and 14th chapters of Corinthians could only be in force while miraculous gifts were present in the Church: much less by the untenable notion that the Epistle to the Corinthians presents only a provisional local order; a notion contradicted in terms by the address of the Epistle, which is strictly universal. "Unto the Church of God which is in Corinth . . . with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." (See also 1 Pet. iv.; Rom. xii.)

There is but the alternative, either to avow that the ministry of the word, since apostolic times, and the edification of believers, rests on the basis of human competency, and is subject to human training, and is to be guided, in its exercise, by the human will, expressed by vote or otherwise; or to acknowledge that it is divine, and that the source from whence it flows, the directions for its exercise, its limitations and grounds of responsibility, are to be determined by an appeal to the New Testament Scriptures alone. If the latter be accepted, it will be seen at once that an ascended Christ (Eph. iv.) is the source from whence it flows, and by whom it is perpetuated; that the Holy Ghost is the power of its exercise, and its only limitation the possession of the gift bestowed by Christ, and its exercise in charity or love, according to 1 Cor. xiii.; while the ground of its responsibility is the known character of Christ and His relationship in grace to the soul.

One thing which has greatly tended in practice to destroy this basis of ministry, and to limit its blessings, as in the hand of Christ, is that almost all the religious systems that have been formed by men have been looked upon as a more or less extensive sphere for the preaching of the gospel; from which this double consequence has resulted, viz., that the work of the evangelist has been impeded by local bonds and obligations, and the Church of God has not been fed, and believers have not been built up on their most holy faith, *because* almost all stated ministry has become ostensibly that of the evangelist, or the preaching of the gospel to the unconverted. But beyond this there has been this further practical consequence, that the competency of the Church to worship and to enjoy Christ's presence has been utterly lost. This absorption of everything into the act and function of preaching leaves neither place nor power for the worship of the united church.

It is not pretended, here, that there is too much zeal in carrying the gospel message into the highways and hedges to poor neglected souls that are dead in trespasses and sins; but the Church of God is a thing to be cared for, as well as the salvation of souls to be sought. "Feed my sheep," "feed my lambs," as much expresses the will of Christ as, "go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." It is the same activity of His love working in another sphere. But worship, which is the Church's special function, whether it possess ostensible ministry or not, rests on the ground of Christ's presence, wherever two or three are gathered together in His name; which has been already insisted on. Worship is, or at least ought to be, the happy occupation of the Church when met together in Christ's name and in the power of the Holy Spirit; but the preaching of the gospel is the proper work of the evangelist, who goes out with the message of mercy to ruined souls in responsibility to Christ. Or there may be teaching in the Church according to the gifts which Christ may have bestowed for that end, according to the word of the apostle, in