

On the first of these points (GOD's present mind about the persons present), it must be remembered that GOD is dealing with us as a physician to heal us, and his way is not to communicate to us his thoughts about our present state, so much as, perfectly apprehending that state, to minister such truth and such discipline to us as will remedy the disease. I see great mistake among many in this; they think that if they could but know all GOD's thoughts about their own present state, they would easily remedy all the evil, and that if they could but see GOD's estimate of others, they would tell it them, and so remedy the evil. But the knowledge of an evil and the cure for it are two distinct things; and often the sense of ignorance as to the exact disease is, in the things of GOD, part of the cure, by leading to more dependence upon Him. If it needs *a case* to confirm this, clearly GOD's communication to Adam and Eve of His knowledge of their fall was not his provision to meet the evil, nor the power of remedy for it.

That a speaker, as *a fellow labourer with God*, should know<sup>1</sup> GOD's estimate of a congregation, or of the individual soul he is ministering to, *may* be expected; never-

<sup>1</sup> And he should know that in deed and in truth he is himself upright before God in the service he is rendering; not serving himself in any way (as speaking to please himself), nor allowing the pleasing of his neighbour to be the actuating motive (though grieved always if he have to pain, or even refresh not his brethren), but always acting under individual *subjection* to God. If he does this he will always be able to say, and to say truly, "I spoke because the Spirit led me, or because I solemnly believed GOD required me to speak; and if I had not done so I should have grieved the Spirit, or gone home with a soiled conscience, as having been disobedient, and should have needed to make confession."

theless this will be little more than for guidance to him, and often if led much in speaking by the Spirit, he will arrive at the truth for others without knowing their state previously,—yea, learn their state from the truth given him, more than what truth to give them from their state; for the Holy Ghost is altogether beyond the renewed mind: the recognition of this I believe to be important. Still, where ministering with intelligence (Divine intelligence I mean), the thing he has to seek after is what is in GOD's mind for the state of things among those present. This, of course, supposes much intercourse with the brethren—a sort of day and night labour as Paul's (Acts 20:31).

On the second point (viz. the communicating to others that which GOD gives for them), I believe that as to the medium of communication, we may say, according to our measure of faith and the Spirit (1 Cor. 1:13), "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." We shall not be guarded absolutely and entirely (as were the Apostles and Prophets while communicating Scripture, both as to apprehension of what GOD would communicate by them, and as to the words by which He would communicate it), or it could not be said, "let the other judge" (1 Cor. 14:29); yet, though in no wise infallibly preserved (as were they in giving us the Scripture), yet, in measure guided and guarded, we may, if humble and relying on the Holy Ghost, surely expect to be.

Fluency of speech and eloquence of diction, the power of producing sensation upon the minds or feelings, the possession

of a fund of scriptural matter of deep interest to ourselves, or which may have been largely blessed elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> will be no excuse for speaking, If what is spoken is not the thought *now* resting upon the mind of Jesus, who is up there at the Father's right hand, and the portion which the Holy Ghost, who is down here, has for the assembly, it should never be spoken, Disregard of the former of the two points referred to (namely, GOD's present thoughts), will leave the ministry without power, howsoever much *influence* the speaker may possess, or howsoever much he may affect to be practical; while neglect of regard to the consciences of the hearers will leave it dry and without unction.

It seems to me, that no one that ministers should be ashamed to speak to his hearers of what he said, and their estimate of it. If I believe that GOD has communicated a portion for present benefit through me, should I not be ready to own I believe it to be of Him, not myself? and surely, if I am not so far assured that He is my leader in service, "silence" not ministry would become me.

I cannot quit this subject without alluding to a point much upon my heart, which is immediately connected with it—the state of the assembly. If the spirit of worship is not in the whole assembly, poor work will teachers or hearers find it. In the

<sup>2</sup> Neither the Lord nor the Spirit could have Interchanged the addresses to Philadelphia and Laodicea, or the epistles to Ephesus and Galatia. And the wretched effects in our own day of small things, of what men call a rousing ministry, where foundation truth is shallow, or of the preaching of privilege only where precept is needed, are obvious enough.

present day, particularly, I find that however gifted any may be, the spirit and power of *worship* is what is most needed. This, as it is surely the spirit of meekness and lowliness of heart before GOD and man, is the great need in all assemblies; and it is this which is the great preparative and safeguard of labour of every kind in those that have ability to minister, as well as of profiting in those ministered to. And is there not in this respect *a* great, if not *the* greatest short coming?<sup>3</sup> Do our assemblies—say on Lord’s day mornings and at our worship meetings—present to the eye of GOD “groups of saints, from the grateful heart of each of whom a reeking fume of thankfulness and gratitude is seen ascending up as incense to Jesus, as He sits at the Father’s right hand”? Are these busy minds, as we sit in silence before our Father, seen by Him to be feeding upon the Lamb in the midst of the throne, who was dead but is alive again? Is there not, rather, much restless occupation with circumstances; some, it may be; thinking who will speak or pray, others, whether they shall do so or not? This is all the result of feebleness in the spirit of worship. I am persuaded that if there were more *sitting* IN SILENCE of worship, and if our *subjection* to the Spirit in conscious mutual subjection were thus more manifested (each heart, each mind the while more busied in communion with

<sup>3</sup> And the wretched effects in our own day of small things, of what men call a rousing ministry, where foundation truth is shallow, or of the preaching of privilege only where precept is needed, are obvious enough. Perhaps the greatest aid that the grace of GOD could give to many gatherings (His answer to the cry for help) would be the sending of a few Hannahs and Annas to raise the tone of spiritual worship. I covet nothing more; for the power brought by such to the whole assembly is easily felt by all that are spiritual.

the Father and the Lamb), we should have far more comfort of love, as well as increase in our fellowship together.

In conclusion, I would only say what I have said before elsewhere, that *the great* object of the Lord’s table is not “instruction” from teachers. Gift or no gift, the saints can “*be obedient in the breaking of bread.*” And this is *the primary* object in the table. The proper character of the service connected with it is also Eucharistic (giving of thanks). It is the table of THANKSGIVING. Held in the Wilderness our feast may be, but the table is spread there by the God of Grace; itself and all connected with it is a standing trophy of the Lord’s triumph in grace over the world, and Satan, and the flesh; and we are owned at it as the beloved children of His bosom, and the heirs of His glory. May we always find it the table of thanksgiving, though it be in the wilderness, and bitter herbs and unleavened bread are to be eaten with the Lamb!

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# Ministry of the Word

THE great question in connection with a man’s ministering in the congregation of the saints is this—“*Does he correctly communicate the present thoughts of the Divine mind as to themselves to those to whom he speaks?*” With whatever lispings or stammering a man may speak in the assembly of the saints, I shall, I trust, never be displeased with the *matter*, while I can say, “That man has evidently laid home upon the consciences of these people the very truth GOD saw they needed,” nor stand in doubt of the speaker while I see that, in the deep sense of weakness, he has spoken not to please himself, but only for the sakes of the Lord and the brethren.

The Ministry of the Word is a very broad subject; and at present, I only attempt a few remarks upon it for present practical benefit.

As to the speaker there are just two points to which he has peculiarly to look, viz. First, “The mind of GOD as in present exercise about those present,” and Secondly, “The communicating to the hearers the truth GOD would place before them.”