

THE WORD OF TRUTH

OTIS Q. SELLERS, Editor August, 1953

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THE BODY OF CHRIST

The ideas set forth in this study have been in my mind for at least four years. They have been discussed with many individuals, and they have been presented to various groups. They have been analyzed, dissected, and criticized by me and my fellow workers, but publication of them has been delayed until now in order that they might be fully developed and seasoned.

I give warning in advance that what I have to say is going to reveal a radical departure from commonly accepted popular views regarding the body of Christ. This, I know from experience will be upsetting to some of my readers who would like to feel that they have reached finality of truth in regard to this subject. However, my service to God requires me to declare what I now see and believe to be the truth.

I am sure that my readers will understand that if thirty-four years ago, when as a mere youth I began my ministry, I had received my message by divine inspiration there would never have been any need of retracting, rearranging, or readjusting anything that I ever said. But I was forced at first to speak out of profound ignorance and inexperience; therefore, it was bound to be that some positions occupied would have to be abandoned as my knowledge of the Word of God increased. Never once did I make the claim that when I opened my mouth the Lord filled it, so the way was always open to retract or to readjust anything, which I said.

Like so many sincere believers of today, I had instilled in me a deadly fear of becoming involved in heresy. To safeguard against this I determined in advance to cast my lot with and to follow closely the teachings of certain men whom I determined in advance "had the truth." Such men as C. I. Scofield, James M. Gray, Arno C. Gaebelien, R. A. Torrey, I. M. Haldeman, and Wm. A. Evans were men whom I felt stood for the truth and were safe to follow.

Their writings were purchased and eagerly read. And as I look back today, I do not regret in the least the fact that I at one time cast my lot with the teachings of these men. They pointed me to the Bible, they never pointed me to anything but the Bible; and even though today I radically disagree with many of their conclusions concerning the meaning of the Word, the writings and messages of these men constantly fanned the flame of my love for the sacred Scriptures.

However, I was never at any time a blind follower of any man or any group of men. When I discovered that these men were not in agreement among themselves on many vital points, it brought the realization that I would need to come to my own conclusions after I had weighed all the available facts. James M. Gray taught a "two compartment theory" in regard to **hades**. A. C. Gaebelein was violently opposed to this. C.I. Scofield taught a very popular theory of seven dispensations, but James -M. Gray did not have much sympathy with some of Scofield's conclusions.

As my own knowledge of the Word of God increased I turned up many vital facts which I felt had not been considered by these teachers, and that these facts if followed out would lead to new heights of truth. This caused me to feel very much unsettled for several years, but it led me to fearlessly seek facts and to test all things.

It was just at this time that a great crisis came into my life and ministry. I was led to see that Acts 28:28 marked a dispensational boundary line, and that the calling of believers which came in after that was a different calling from those who were so prominent in the Acts period. To the uninstructed, this new belief may not seem to be very far-reaching in its effects, but I soon discovered that it had a bearing on almost everything. that I had ever believed practiced or taught. My life, my thinking and my service all had to be readjusted to this new and positive truth. I desperately wanted help, and turned to the writings of those who had recognized these great truths before me. These writers were few in number. And in the spirit of frankness and honesty, I must say that I found these writings to be inadequate and disappointing.

This statement may seem harsh and unkind, but it is not said in any spirit of carping criticism. It is said in order to relieve the disappointment of many others who feel that somewhere in the past or present is a writer who speaks the final and authoritative word in regard to full dispensational truth, and if they can get his writings they will have in their possession all that is needed to guide them in a life of devotedness to the truth of God.

One writer to whom I turned was Dr. E. W. Bullinger, In view of what I was seeking his writings were a sore disappointment. He held a strong position in regard to Acts 28:28, 'but treated the whole of Paul's epistles as one group, making no distinction between those epistles written before Acts 28:28 and those written after. He radically changed his position in 1908, but died five years later. His final position is not reflected in any of his writings except "The Foundations of Dispensational Truth", and this book is far from complete.

At this point I believe it will be well to insert several paragraphs from the writings of Mr. C. H. Welch, which have a bearing upon this. In a series of articles on "Less Than the Least", he tells of a meeting with Dr. Bullinger.

Toward the end of 1908 I felt moved to write to Dr. Bullinger. I had seen a copy of *Things to Come* while still acting as Secretary to the Bible Training College, and although I had been warned against the Doctor's "heretical" teaching, much that I read struck a familiar chord. After an interval I again saw an issue of *Things to Come* and was amazed to see an article, which I could have duplicated from my own notes. Evidently, I thought, whoever wrote that article had moved along similar lines to myself, and so, with some trepidation I plucked up courage 'to write to the Doctor, asking him for an opportunity to see him and to talk over one or two important points in which I felt bound to differ from his findings.

One of the points raised in this letter reads:

"Are we not liable to be using transitional things if we do not discriminate in epistles like Corinthians and Romans - truth tempered to suit the time when the Jew was a factor to be reckoned with, but not so now,"

After some delay, the Doctor granted me an interview at the offices of the Trinitarian Bible Society, Bury Street, London, W., and that hour's interview proved to be the most critical turning point in my life and ministry. The Doctor invited me to say what was troubling me, and I feared, that after all, he would smile indulgently, pat me on the shoulder and tell me to go home and forget all about it. Again I plucked up courage and here is a transcript of our conversation.

Myself, - From your writings, Doctor, I believe that I am right in saying that you do not believe "The Church" began at Pentecost, but rather, that the Dispensational Boundary must be drawn at Acts 28?

Dr. Bullinger. - That is so. I have made that quite clear.

Myself. - Well, what seems to me to stultify the position you have taken regarding Acts 28, is, that you nevertheless treat the whole of Paul's epistles as one group, starting with Romans, ending with Thessalonians, with Ephesians somewhere in the centre.

To my amazement and joy, 'the Doctor looked at me for a moment, then slapping his thigh with his hand said: "That scraps half the books that I have written. But we want Truth, and the Truth is there in what you have said."

I felt that here was indeed "grace". Dr. Bullinger was a man of world repute, a scholar and an elder. I was a young man of 28 years and, unknown. We spent the remainder of our brief interview in considering the dispensational implications from observing the relation of Paul's epistles to the boundary line of Acts 28, thus:

<i>Acts 28</i>	
EPISTLES BEFORE	EPISTLES AFTER
(1) Galatians	(1) Ephesians
(2) 1 Thessalonians	(2) Philippians
(3) 2 Thessalonians	(3) Colossians
(4) Hebrews	(4) Philemon
(5) 1 Corinthians	(5) 1 Timothy
(6) 2 Corinthians	(6) Titus
(7) Romans	(7) 2 Timothy

(From *The Berean Expositor*, Volume 35, Number 6, November 1949. pages 102, 103.)

As this highly illuminating account is read one cannot help but feel that Dr. Bullinger had had this important step under consideration long before the hour of his meeting with Mr. Welch. His visit seems to have been the thing, which brought the matter to a head. This deduction on my part may not be correct but it seems quite logical.

It seems almost a tragedy that Dr. Bullinger did not live long enough to give all men the benefit of his ripe scholarship in regard to the epistles of Paul once they were divided on the basis of the dispensational change at Acts 28:28. His writings are still of the greatest possible value, but much confusion has been caused in the minds of many who do not know that a great change came into his convictions, and that this change is not reflected in any of his writings except in one incomplete book. However, the fact that this scholar of world repute was willing to make a change that would seem to scrap half the books that he had written reveals that he loved and put truth above everything else. Acting upon the Scriptural admonition that we give honor to whom honor is due, I honor this scholar above every other writer I have ever read. When you read his books, you know you are

reading the writing of an honest man. You know that if he had seen it differently he would have so declared it. From one of his magazines I gleaned the following paragraph:

Any discrepancy in our various works must be explained by the fact that we are learning as well as teaching; and shall never pose as having no more to learn. In this light, our readers must take our more recent utterances and editions as representing such advance in our learning, and kindly judge us by these. *Things to Come*, February, 1905.

(Returning now to Sellers)

In all my experience I have not come upon another man like this. I have come upon many men who claimed they were students, but who gave no evidence-that they were learning. At least they never seem to discover anything that causes them to make a radical change. They will admit that they could learn more about their beliefs, but they refuse to entertain any idea that they might learn anything that would lead to an alteration of their beliefs.

One .of the reasons behind the lengthy introduction to this study is to make it clear to all my readers that I did not turn from one teacher to become the follower of another teacher. I am not a follower of E. W. Bullinger, or of any other teacher or writer. I am an independent student and teacher of the Word of God, and I come to my own conclusions after a careful consideration of all the facts involved. It seems to trouble some that my teaching is quite different from that of Mr. C. H. Welch on many points, but this does not trouble Mr. Welch, neither does it trouble me. I have before me now a recent communication from him in which he says:

I do not see eye to eye with some of your findings, but we both treasure the "Berean" spirit, without which, even agreement may be significant of death rather than of life. No place is so quiet as a graveyard but that is not anything to emulate.

In connection with the study on the body of Christ I would like to quote a paragraph which I recently came across and which gripped my mind and heart. In his book *The Theocratic Kingdom*, George N. H. Peters, makes the following statement.

Many shrink from investigation when they find that things which they fondly believed, incorporated in their prayers and hopes, and portrayed with eloquence, are subject to the suspicion of being built upon a sandy foundation, It is a trite saying that "truth never dies", however great the opposition; and we may rest assured that any opinion that we may individually entertain, can never alter or seriously affect the truth of God. It is folly to shelter ourselves behind the fear that, peradventure, inquiry and scrutiny may lead to a revolution of our views. This may indeed be an amiable weakness, but it is one as fatal to the student as Delilah's hands were to Samson. If in earnest search after the truth, such a result, should it occur under clear apprehension and decided conviction of Scriptural authority, must be accepted *as alone honorable*. It is to the credit of some of the greatest writers, that opinions once strongly advocated were subsequently discarded under the persuasion that truth, honesty, and integrity required the change.

It is thrilling to read words such as these, and it is in the spirit of these words that I undertake to set forth certain convictions concerning the body of Christ. In doing this I will need to approach the subject by- stating certain things, which are "most surely believed."

Acts 28:28, The Dispensational Boundary

It has now been 19 years since I came to the conclusion and conviction that Paul's declaration in Acts 28:28 marks a dispensational boundary line. I believe that that hour when these words were

spoken marks the beginning of the dispensation or administration of the grace of God. It was at this point that God's kingdom program and purposes were suspended and a new work began.

There are many partial dispensationalists who grudgingly admit this. The sheer logic of this position and the facts recorded in Acts force this admission from them. [For example, Cornelius R. Stam, in his book on *The Fundamentals of Dispensationalism* says on page 223. "We must not forget that Paul, though entrusted with *another* commission and "the gospel of the grace of God", nevertheless *confirmed* Peter's message and proclaimed and proved to the Jews everywhere that "Jesus is the Christ", for the offer of the kingdom, made at Pentecost, was not officially withdrawn until Acts 28:28. Hence it is not strange to find these miraculous confirmations of Christ's kingdom rights continued until this time." Mr. Stam does not seem to take into consideration that in the Acts period the mighty signs and wonders performed by Paul had to do with his message and ministry to the Gentiles. This fact is declared in Romans 15:18,19].

But I hold this truth fully and joyfully, following it out to all its conclusions and accepting all its consequences.

In the 19 years that have passed since I accepted the great principle that Acts 28:28 marks a dispensational boundary line, I have honestly considered every possible objection that could be raised against this position. I have sought out and read every line that has ever been written against it. Much of this has been picking of flaws, name-calling, personal abuse, harsh words, and bitter denunciation, but I have carefully waded through every bit of it. In fact I have battered at this idea myself from every possible angle, as I did not care to stake my life and service upon an idea that could not stand every test. But it has stood, and I today hold as boldly and firmly as possible that a major change in God's work and purposes took place at Acts 28:28; This truth is a fixed star which I never lose sight of as I seek to gain and fix other positions.

God's Present Calling

In harmony with the great truth that Acts 28:28 is the dispensational boundary line, it is my firmly held position that the believers of the Acts period are a different calling from those whom God has called into fellowship with *His* Son after Acts 28:28. When all the facts that bear upon this are assembled no other belief is possible. The saints of the Acts period are a different company of saints from those who are called in the dispensation of grace.

I would emphasize this as strongly as possible. Before any: one attempts to judge or appraise the teachings which I will later set forth, I want them to know that I firmly hold that God's called ones of the present dispensation are a different calling from those of the Acts period. This position has been so thoroughly explored and so carefully examined that I have no shadow of doubt concerning it.

Similar Yet Different

In the past 19 years I have received at least a dozen different studies wherein someone has attempted to point out the similarities between the believers of the Acts period and the believers of the dispensation of grace. They hold that these points of similarity prove that these two callings are the same.

I recognize and admit everyone of these points of similarity. In fact I am amused at *times* at some of the more obvious points of likeness, which these special pleaders have missed. It would be a simple matter for me to quickly list a hundred points. of comparison between the believers in Jesus

Christ in the Acts period and the believers in Christ in the dispensation of grace. But this would prove nothing except that these two callings are similar in many things. I do not hold that God's present calling is unlike His past calling in every detail. I hold that they are two different callings.

The argument that these two callings are proved to be the same because of their likenesses "is as false as the argument of the evolutionist who points to the many similarities between man and the ape and argues from this that man is an ape.

If one man states that his calling is legal and another states that his calling is medical, these two callings are not the same even if these two men are identical twins.

It is not important in connection with this study for us to enter into a detailed discussion of all the points wherein the Acts calling and God's present calling are distinct. It is sufficient here to state that the believers of the Acts period (both Jew and c Gentile) were called in connection with God's kingdom purposes, that is, His purposes to bring heavens government into and upon this earth (I Thess. 2:12), while the believers of today are called in connection with God's purpose in grace (II Timothy 1:9). The Acts period believers (Jew and Gentile) were redeemed by grace in relationship to God's kingdom purposes (Acts 15:11), but the believer in this day is saved by grace in relationship to God's purposes in grace. If the reader will compare I Corinthians 6:1-3 with Ephesians 1:6 and 2:7 he will see at once the difference between those who someday will serve God in connection with His government and those who will serve Him in connection with the witness to His grace. Remember, that how a man is saved does not determine his calling. What a man is saved to and for does determine his calling. We have been saved by grace and for grace. Our supreme duty today is to walk worthy of the calling in which we are called (Ephesians 4:1). We fail to do this when we try to walk according to the truths that belong to other callings.

The truth that Acts 28:28 is a dispensational boundary line, and the truth that God's present calling is a unique and distinct calling are truths that have been recognized by thousands. It has been my privilege to lead many to see these blessed truths, which do so much to make the New Testament an open book. However, from the days of Bullinger until now these truths have been stultified by a hundred and one mistaken ideas, which have surrounded them. I have been involved in some of these erroneous ideas myself, but have always obeyed the admonition to "prove all things, hold fast to that which is good." This has resulted in deliverance from many of these ideas that have no real foundation in the Word. However, there are many people to whom these ideas are the very truth itself, and any attempt to reexamine them is sure to bring cries of heresy from those dispensationalists who feel that their immature ideas are the very finality of truth.

One of these ideas is that the "high calling of God" spoken of in Philippians 3:14 is in reality "God's calling on high" and that it sets forth another rapture, one that precedes that set forth in I Thessalonians 4:17. It is held by many that this rapture which is set forth in Philippians will mark the close of the present dispensation and will result in the transfer of God's present calling.

At one time I was quite willing to accept this. I did so mostly upon the basis that it had been set forth by Dr. Bullinger after he had abandoned the idea of the parousia of I Thessalonians 4 being the expectation of God's present calling. Concerning this he had said:

This latter was not revealed till *after* the close of the Dispensation of the Acts of the Apostles, but was kept secret until it was made known *in* the new Dispensation of the Mystery. It is connected with and related to our prize, which is our CALLING ON HIGH, or the heavenward call of Philippians 3:14.

This wondrous truth is still a secret to thousands, because it has been hidden from all readers of the Authorized Version. There, the *adverb* "ON HIGH" (as we have before pointed out, more than once) is translated as though it were an adjective, "HIGH" as though merely qualifying the *nature* of the

calling. Whereas the adverb has to do with describing the *direction* or manner of the calling. *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth*, page 128.

This seemed like sound reasoning to me, but I well remember the solid reaction that came from numerous students of the Word the first time that I broached this in print. These criticisms were constructive in their nature, pointing out facts that I had failed to consider. I had fallen into a trap that had caught many, even the erudite Dr. Bullinger.

The Greek here for "the high calling" is *tes ana kleseas*. It is true that *ana* (high) is an adverb. Since in English grammar it is a rule that adverbs qualify verbs and adjectives qualify nouns, it is reasoned from this that *kleseas* (calling) must be considered a verb; therefore, this phrase should be translated "the calling on high" instead of "the high calling." By this reasoning the phrase can be made to speak of a time when God will call His own people from this earthly scene.

While this reasoning seems to be sound, it can be demonstrated to be completely false by another passage in which *ana* appears in the same construction. This passage is Galatians 4:26, where we find *he ana Hierousalem*, or "Jerusalem which is above." Here *ana* qualifies and governs "Jerusalem" just as surely as it does "calling" in Philippians 3:14. Would anyone dare to insist in this passage that "Jerusalem" must be a verb?

So far as the phrase "the high calling of God" is concerned, the *King James Version* of Philippians 3:14 cannot be improved upon. If we retranslate this to make it say "God's calling on high" we will be creating a false hope based upon its mistranslation which the facts of Scripture will not support. I call upon all those who claim to be full dispensationalists to cease talking about a "calling on high" and acting as if they were fully supported by the Philippian passage. I regret that in the beginning of my studies I ever detoured into this false idea. However, the detour was a short one and the experience cleared the way for further progress.

Another error in which many dispensationalists are involved, and one that I never became involved in, is that which can best be summed up in the words "body truth." Nineteen years ago when I first began to consider these things, men were taking God's distinct and unique truths for the present time and lumping them all under the designation of "body truth." There was much talk about teaching "body truth", that "body truth" was the truth for today, but those who were making the greatest use of this term did not attempt to define it. When they were asked what they meant by "body truth" they quibbled about it being "Pauline truth" or "church truth."

I repudiated the term "body truth" from the very beginning, and it has never appeared in my messages either written or spoken. I still insist that it is a meaningless and misleading term, and that it misrepresents God's truth for the present time. It is still freely used by those who make no distinction between the epistles of Paul written before Acts 28:28 and those written after, but for all who recognize this distinction the use of the term "body truth" is simply the perpetuation of an old error.

There is not a single logical reason why God's unique truth' for the present time should be called "body truth." Some think that the unique character of God's present calling is based upon the fact that it is "the body of Christ." This is most certainly an error, since Paul said to men of another calling "**Now ye are the body of Christ.**" **I Corinthians 12:27.**

A serious mistake has been made and perpetuated in regard to this. For while it is true that we who believe today are a unique and distinct calling, we cannot claim any distinction because we are the body of Christ. This is a definite point of similarity between the kingdom calling and the grace calling. Those who were called in the Acts period have just as much right to the designation "body of Christ" as we have. No matter what means we use to explain away I Corinthians 12:27, it will still remain that in the Greek it says, "You are body of Christ." We deny the Word when we attempt to

exclude the Corinthians from this position, and we take too much to ourselves when we claim that this is our unique and distinct privilege. As said before, this is one of the points wherein we compare with the believers of the Acts period. They were "body of Christ" and we are "body of Christ". We are not unique in this. It is a blessing, which we share with the kingdom calling. This position represents a definite advance in my understanding of God's Word, and my readers will kindly judge all my previous declarations upon this matter in this light.

The Church Which is His Body

In seeking for Scriptural designations for God's present calling, I adopted the term "the church which is His body"; and in seeking a designation for the calling of the Acts period I felt that the term "church of God" belonged to that company of believers. This led me to try to make distinctions between "the church of God" of the Acts period and "the church which is His body" of the dispensation of grace. And while it was right to make the sharpest possible distinction between the believers of the Acts period and the believers of today, the designations given to these two companies were arbitrary and misleading.

In the past six years I have devoted much time and thought to an independent study of **ecclesia** truth, and in connection with this I have made a most exacting study of the word *body*. The facts uncovered have constantly hammered at my position, and it is now impossible for me to believe that the Acts period believers were "church of God", but that we are not; or that we are "the church which is His body", but they are not. These ideas are untenable, and, they serve only to stultify the glorious truth of the distinct and unique nature of God's present calling.

All of this rests upon the exact significance and meaning of the word "body" as used in Paul's epistles. Those who use the word *body* most freely do not trouble themselves to define the term.

"The church is the body of Christ", is a statement, which is repeatedly made. Those who make this declaration act as if they were setting forth some great light, but the statement belongs in the same category as answers to catechism questions. Anyone who makes this statement should be ready to define his terms. He should be ready to answer the question "What is the body of Christ?" And if his answer is "The body of Christ is the church", he should be asked to get off the merry-go-round. We can learn nothing from the statement that the church is the body of: Christ unless we know what the body of Christ is. If we do not know this, then we are just as ignorant as before the statement was made.

In the statement, "The papaya is an edible fruit" we have one that carries a wealth of information to anyone who knows what "edible" means and what "fruit" is. But if the one who hears this statement does not have a clear understanding of these two words, he will be just as ignorant of the papaya as before the statement was made.

The language of Christendom abounds in undefined words and phrases. These are used to make the hearers think that something has been said, when in reality no information has been imparted. If the words are carefully examined, it will often be discovered that the speaker has in reality said nothing. The so-called Christian religion is filled with ritualistic words and phrases, most of which came from the Bible. These words and phrases have real significance as, used in the Bible, but when they are separated from the Word, they convey no meaning.

In the providence of God, lest the love of the truth should perish from among the hearts of men, many have been exercised deeply in regard to the exact truth revealed for the present time. I claim to be one of these, and I know there are many more among my readers. God forbid that we who have

been so graciously quickened should allow our walk and witness for Him to degenerate into little more than the constant quoting of meaningless phrases, most of which have no real authority in Scripture. And many of those, which have been taken from Scripture have become meaningless due to failure to define the terms used.

If men insist on using such terms as "body truth," "church of the mystery", "church of the one body", "mystical body", "in the mystery", etc., etc., then let them once and for all say exactly' what they mean by these terms, and also let them justify the use of them since they have no real authority in Scripture. Furthermore, let all of us who use such Scriptural terms as "the body of Christ", and "the church which is His body" be careful to define just what we mean by these terms, This will safeguard all who love the truth from degenerating into a sect in which all are included who say the shibboleths, and all are excluded who do not use the proper words.

The Word "Body" Defined

I have never been satisfied to use a word unless I had a clear understanding of the idea it was supposed to convey. Very early in my consideration of present truth, I desired above all things to fully understand what idea the Spirit of God intended to convey to us by the word *body*, in such phrases as "the body of Christ" and "the church which is His body," I began to weigh all possibilities, and very early in my investigations I came upon one idea that was quite popular, but which I repudiated at once as a monumental error. By the simple method of asking questions I discovered that to many "the body of Christ" was a term that indicated some enormous giant, all parts below the neck composed of believing men and women, while the Lord Jesus was that part above the neck, the head. This was not an idea held by a few ignorant people, for a well educated teacher of "body truth" had actually presented this idea to a woman who had asked him for light as to the nature of the body of Christ. To her he said in part, "We make up the body .of Christ. For all you know you may be only a little strip of flesh in His side."

This popular idea is so erroneous that it needs only to be put into words to show how foolish it is. A good-natured Britisher told me that an Englishman's conception of God is that He is another Englishman, twelve feet tall. I cannot vouch for the truth of this, but I do know that the conception of the body of Christ held by many who claim to believe "body truth" is that of a great giant twelve miles tall whose torso and limbs is composed of men and women, while Christ Himself stands on the shoulders as the head. This certainly is not the idea the Spirit of God intended to convey when He speaks of the body of Christ.

It seems that it is this conception that men refer to when they speak of "the mystical body of Christ." This is an unscriptural phrase which I have never used and one with which I will have nothing to do. I consider it an expression that belongs to "the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11), and I can have no fellowship with it.

The word *mystical* means "Remote from or beyond human comprehension; baffling understanding; unknowable; obscure; mysterious." I readily admit that the least truth of God can be all of this so far as the natural man is concerned, but it need not be so to the man whose spirit has been touched by the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit has never used the word *mystical* in connection with the word *body*. The term "mystical body of Christ" is one coined by men whose wild imaginations about the nature of the body of Christ have led them into conceptions that are beyond human comprehension and will always baffle all attempts at understanding.

In my continued search for a true understanding of the word *body*, I was led upon a path, which seemed very satisfactory at first, but later I found it necessary to retrace my steps. Since it is quite common to speak collectively of a number of individuals as a body, it seemed that this might be the way in which this word is used in the Pauline epistles. This would make Ephesians 1:22, 23 to mean literally, "the ecclesia which is His company of people"; Ephesians 3:6 to mean that the Gentiles were the members of a joint company of people; and Ephesians 5:30 to mean, we are members of His company of people. The sheer simplicity of: this caused it to make a strong appeal to me, and the fact that all the statements listed above were true led me to adopt this idea as to the meaning of the word *body*. However, while it is entirely true that we are members of His company of people, this is not the meaning of the word *body*. But at least this idea provided me a resting place for a time where I could stand while gaining other facts, which would lead me to retrace my steps and search anew for the meaning of this word.

I discovered my own mistake in reasoning. I had considered the English word *body*, ignoring the vital fact that this was not the word used by the Spirit of God. He used the Greek word *soma*. And while it can be easily proved that the English word *body* is used as a collective noun to designate a company of people, it cannot be demonstrated that the Greek word *soma* was ever so used. This is an English metaphor, which is not known in New Testament Greek. So my search for the meaning of this word began anew, and it was greatly simplified by the clearing away of this wrong conception. I sought earnestly for some intimation that would lead me to the true meaning of this word. This, as is so often the case, came when I was not actually looking for it.

In connection with a study of Colossians, I noticed again an obvious fact that the Greek word *soma* (body) is used as being opposite in meaning from "shadow" in 2:17. The passage reads:

Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Colossians 2:17.

In checking this passage I noticed that A. T. Robertson said of it, "A shadow (*skia*) Old word, opposed to substance (*Soma*, body)"; and that Weymouth, Moffatt, Montgomery, Fenton, Revised Standard Version and many others translate *soma* by "substance" in this passage. Goodspeed translates it "reality." Bullinger notes this meaning in his book, *The Church Epistles*.

I had noticed this truth before, but it had failed to make any great impression upon me;. But this time the question came to my mind - since the word *soma* evidently means *substance* in Colossians 2:17, is it not possible that it could mean this in many other places. A look at certain references showed that this was possible. For example - what was wrong with saying "the ecclesia which is His substance" (Eph. 1:22, 23), or "Now ye are the substance of Christ (I Cor. 12:27). These statements are certainly true, but whether this was what the Spirit meant or not was open to question. I determined that many more facts were needed, and I began to seek them out. Since these facts are vital to any further consideration of our theme, I will put these before the reader.

Basically and fundamentally the Greek word *soma* does mean *substance*; nevertheless, this word does not fully express the meaning of the Greek. At times it seems that the word *essence* will best express its meaning and again the word *reality*.

Our English word *body* does not mean basically the human form or the animal form. The primary meaning of the word *body* is substance. This is seen in our constant use of: the word *body* in connection with cloth, paint, or perfume. The body of woolen cloth is the wool it contains, the body of paint relates to the pigment, and the body of a perfume has to do with the essential oil that is in it.

The Greek word *soma* and the English word *body* are in complete accord so far as their flexibility is concerned. Both words have the same basic meaning of substance, and both are used in the same figurative way.

That aspect of man, which is his substance is called body, for this is exactly what it is. The words *spirit* or *soul* cannot be used in regard to the substance of man.

God took the dust of the earth and used this substance to make man. The Bible declares that man is dust, and at death the body or substance of man returns to the soil from whence it is taken. Therefore, man is soil both as to his substance and essence.

While this is true of man, it is not true of the Lord *Jesus* Christ. He was essentially the Expression (Word) of God, and this Word was made flesh. When God made man there was nothing about man that preceded that moment when God took soil and from that substance made flesh. But when the man Christ *Jesus* came into the earth, it was the One who had been the Expression of God that was made flesh. Therefore *Jesus* Christ as to His substance and essence was not flesh when He appeared upon the earth. He was in substance and essence the Expression of God.

If men become partakers of Christ, then in whatever measure they partake of Him, they too can express and declare God. Peter speaks of this very thing in his second epistle where it is revealed that men did become partakers of the divine nature. Paul speaks of this same truth in Hebrews 3:14, and *Jesus* Christ spoke of it in John 14:20. In fact the simple truth that *Jesus* Christ gives of Himself, what He is, to companies of the redeemed so that they can become what He is, is a truth so generally believed that I need to do no more than point it out here.

If we partake of Him we partake of His substance, and in whatever measure we partake of His substance, we become what He is. This, I believe, is the truth that Paul was seeking to exalt and emphasize in his frequent references to the body of Christ. This is what he meant when he said that we are the body (substance) of Christ. We become this because He gave of His own self to us.

With these facts before us we will now examine a few of the leading references in which the word *body* occurs, those passages in which it is plain that the word does not refer to the physical frame of man or of Christ.

Matthew 26:26

The Greek word *soma* occurs sixteen times in Matthews' gospel. In fifteen of these occurrences it is most evident that it is used to designate the material aspect of a man, even the material aspect of Christ. However in one important reference wherein Jesus Christ speaks of His body it does not mean His material aspect, that is, His flesh. In this passage it means His substance, His essence, what He is in God's sight.

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to His disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. Matthew 26:27.

After careful consideration of the matter, it is my conviction that this means *this represents my substance*. [also Reference is made here to "The Companion Bible", Appendix 159, page 183]

The substance of a bottle of true perfume is the essential oil, which it contains. If the alcohol or other ingredient, which is used to extend the fragrant oil is removed there will remain the substance or essence. As to His substance or essence, the Lord Jesus Christ was the Expression (Logos) of God (John 1:1). He was this before He was made flesh and dwelt among men and He remained this after He became flesh. Bread was the perfect symbol for this. Over and over it had been used as a type of the word (expression) of God. Long before this night of His betrayal Christ had declared that He was "the true bread from heaven, for the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world" (John 6:32, 33).

At the last passover which He observed with His disciples, the Lord Jesus took the passover bread, broke it and gave it to His disciples, bidding them to eat it, declaring that it was a representation of what He was in reality, His substance, the Expression of God, therefore God in manifestation. His human flesh was not His real substance. This was only the form which the Expression of God took when He became flesh. But substantially and essentially He was the visible image of the invisible God. By means of the passover bread, He tells them that they are soon to partake of what He is, that they were to partake of, His substance. By this they would become His substance, that is, His body.

This same truth is set forth in the parallel passage, Mark 14:22 and Luke 22:19. However in the

Luke passage an important addition is made. There the Lord is reported by Luke to have said, "**This represents my substance which for you is given.**" Many take this to mean nothing more than that He would die upon the Cross, but it means far more than that. All that He is is to be given to His own so that they would become what He is, one with Him. '

In I Corinthians 11:24 we find the additional words "which is broken for you." The word "broken" here is of very doubtful textual authority, and it should read "Take, eat: this represents my substance which is for you." Thus it was that the King of glory gave of: Himself to His people that they might become kings with Him. Earthly kings draw all that they have from the people. This King gives of Himself to His people.

On the basis of these facts it is plain that the word "body" in Matthew 26:26 has no reference to the physical substance, the human body of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a blessed relief it is to find deliverance from this delusion.

Luke 17:37

Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

In his report of this same prophetic incident, Matthew is inspired to use the word that means *carcas* or *corpse* (Matthew 24:38). But Luke *is* inspired to use another word in order to emphasize and extend the truth. It is men who have partaken of the divine nature, men who are representing the Judge of all the earth upon the earth who will flee from Judea to the mountains in the events that are described in Matthew 24:15-20. These will be the special object of hate in the revolt against God's government that precedes the second coming of Christ. In this passage we see the lawless, like vultures, gathered against those who have represented and expressed the government of God upon the earth. These are the real substance of the kingdom.

Romans 7:4

Wherefore, my brethren ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ.

In this passage Paul tells these believers that they have become dead to the law by what Jesus Christ is. They could never become this through what they were or anything they made themselves to be. They became dead to the law by the substance of Jesus Christ. He Himself is the fulfillment of the law for righteousness to all who believe. See Romans 10:4.

I Corinthians 12:12-27

Inasmuch as the word *body* occurs eighteen times in this portion it demands our careful consideration. The reader will need to have his Bible open as the passage is too long to reproduce here. An extended paraphrase of this portion will make it clear. The subject of the portion is gifts, and Paul here seeks to get these gifted people to work in greater harmony. He does this by using the human body as an illustration.

For just as the human substance is a unit even though it has many parts, and all the parts of that one substance, many though they are, constitute but one substance, so also the Anointed (that is those to whom Christ has given a portion of Himself). For in one Spirit all of us, whether we be Jews or Greeks, slaves or free men, have all been identified with one substance, and have been all made to drink of one Spirit. For the human substance does not consist of one part, but of many. If the foot shall say, "Because I am not the hand, I am not of the substance", that would -not make it any less a part of the human substance. And if the ear shall say "Because I am not the eye, I am not the body," that would not make the ear any less a part of the human substance. If the whole substance were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were an ear, where would the nostrils be? But the fact is God the creator of man has arranged the parts of the human substance as He has seen fit. If they were all one part, where would the substance be? But, as a matter of fact, they are one substance.

It is impossible for the eye to truly say to the hand, "I do not need you", or again for the hand to say -to the feet, "I do not need you." No, the truth is, it is quite otherwise. Even those portions of our human substance which seem to 'be somewhat feeble are quite indispensable; and those which seem less worthy of honor, we clothe with more abundant honor. And so our ungraceful parts come to have a more abundant grace, while our graceful parts have everything they need. But it was God who mixed together the human substance, and bestowed more honor to the part that had need because of the work it was given to do, so that there would be no disunion in the human substance, but that. all the parts might entertain the same anxious care for one another's welfare. And if one part of the human substance suffers, every other part suffers with it; or if one part is receiving special honor, every other part shares in the joy.

This then is the illustration. And when we remember that the human substance is soil, the illustration becomes vivid and powerful. God had taken this soil and out of it had made that marvelous telescope, microscope, and camera which we call the eye, and *from* that same soil had made the smallest -digit upon the foot. These are both made of the same substance, but it was necessary for God to bestow greater honor upon the eye because of the service it was to perform. Thus soil, placed by God, powered by the life that came from Him, became either eye or *toe*.

In the application of this illustration, Paul declares to them emphatically, "**Now you are the substance of Christ.**" **I Cor. 12:27.** Among these out-called ones God had set some as apostles, prophets, teachers. To some had been given miraculous powers, gifts of healing, ability to render help, to govern, or to speak in languages. Yet everyone of these were what they were because they had partaken of Christ.

Jesus Christ was God's apostle (Hebrews 3:1), but He had given of what He was to certain men and they became the apostles of God. Jesus Christ was God's prophet, but He had shared this with others and they too became prophets. Some were teachers. But they were teachers because the great teacher had given Himself to them. Some had miracles (*dunamis*, meaning power) but this had originally rested in Christ (Luke 24:49) and He- gave of what He was to some in Corinth. The men who had the gifts of healing, helps, governments, or languages, had these things because Christ has

given of Himself to them and they partook of His power, wisdom, or ability; All did not have the same, but not one had anything which He had not received from Christ (I Corinthians 4:7). Truly these believers were His substance, or to state it in other words, they were His body.

Ephesians 1:22-23

It is from these two passages that we get the phrase "the church which is His body", even though the verse division has split it in two. I do not believe that the Spirit of God ever intended this as a name for God's present calling. This phrase tells us something about God's outcalling or out-called ones. They are His substance. It is His substance that makes them what they are. I understand the Greek here to tell us that God has given Christ Jesus, the Head over all, to the ecclesia, which is His substance.

Some may object to this because of the use of the word *Head* here in connection with the word *body*. They may feel that this leads us to think of something, which is like the human frame. This is based upon a mistaken idea as to the source of the figurative words *head* and *body*.

The Greek word translated *head* is *kephale*. This word literally means *sum*. Another form of this same word is translated "sum" in Hebrews 8:1, also in Acts 22:28. This same word is translated "gather together" in Ephesians 1:10.

The term *kephale* and its various forms were originally and are still fundamentally mathematical terms. The Greeks- actually "added up" a column of figures and put the *kephale* or sum at the top. This can be called "heading up" a column of figures. The sum or head expresses the figures.

Since the top part of a man's body seemed to sum up and to express the whole man, the Greeks called the uppermost part of a man's body his *kephale*, or head. It is not right to think of head as if it were no part or separate from a man's body. The word *sum* means the expression of substance. The words *sum* and *substance* belong to each other.

In view of these facts I do not hesitate to say that in Ephesians 1:22-23 the Holy Spirit is telling us that God has given Jesus Christ, the One who is the Sum of the out-called, which are His substance.

At this point I believe it will be well to report as accurately as possible a conversation I had with a friend concerning this. He spoke first, putting a question to me.

I find, Mr. Sellers, that *soma* is translated "body" in all of its 147 occurrences except one. Would you say that the translators were wrong every time?

No, I would say that they were right every time. They did a wonderfully consistent job in translating this word, going astray only once in Revelation 18:13. The point is not, does *soma* mean body, for that is exactly what it does mean. The point is, does *body* always mean or have reference to the human frame, which it certainly does not.

Then, you do not mean that *soma* should be translated *substance* or *essence*?

No, all I mean is that the word *body* must be understood as meaning substance or essence. This is in complete harmony with English usage, but we seem to forget this when we come to Scripture.

Ephesians 4:4

In setting forth the unities of the Spirit which men are exhorted to keep, the first unity is declared to be "one body." This means one substance, and that substance is the essence of Christ. It is what He is, it is all that He is. All who partake of Christ, no matter what their calling may be, partake of this one body or substance. He is the Expression of both the Judge of all the earth and of the God of every grace. He reveals the God of grace and the God of government.

We of this present calling partake of nothing from Him, which qualifies men for a place in His government. We partake of that polarity of His character, which will fully qualify us as exponents of His grace. We cannot claim that we alone partake of His substance or that our calling is alone His body. Furthermore, we cannot claim that we are an out-calling (church) which is His body, and then say that the Corinthians were an out-calling which is not His body. With all my heart I believe that we are a unique and distinct calling, destined for a unique position in which we will perform a unique service. But the fact of this distinction cannot be maintained by claiming that we are the body; but they are not.

In Conclusion

I believe that I have opened up this subject for study. Some will be disappointed because I have not examined every passage in Paul's final epistles where the word body occurs. But it was not my purpose to do this. If I had done so, it would have provided some with more to accept and provided others with still more to reject. I do not believe I am interested in making either of these provisions. My sole desire is to send men back to the book, there to discover anew all that He has revealed concerning the body of Christ. Of those who take up this study, I ask, that they keep this truth in mind. We do not make up the body (substance) of Christ. It is the body (substance) of Christ that makes us what we are, no matter what our calling may be. We become His substance because He has given of His substance to us. In view of this the question., "When did the body of Christ begin?" is shown to be a wrong question. We can never give a right answer to a wrong question. But if we are asked the question, "When did God's present calling begin?" we will answer without-hesitation. It began after the declaration by Paul in Acts 28:28. It began after the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles.

The End

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

****I have been trying to figure out just what happened to the first eight months of this year. There is so much that I hoped to accomplish which still stands as unfinished business. Our days are busy ones and happy ones and times flies very swiftly. It seems that I just about get my bags unpacked when it is time to start packing again. And the moment I finish one manuscript another is waiting to be started. But I love every minute of it, and I give thanks daily to the Lord for the privilege of serving Him in relationship to His truth.

****The Editor's wider ministry this fall will begin in Rockford, Illinois on September 10 and finish in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on October 18. The dates and places are as follows: Rockford, Illinois, September 10 to 13; Peoria, Illinois, September 14 to 16; Chicago, Illinois, September 17 to 20; Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 21 and 22; Muskegon, Michigan, September 23 to 27; Kalamazoo, Michigan, September 29 and 30; Grand Rapids, Michigan, October 1 to 4; Buffalo, New York, October 6 to 8; Greenwich, New York, October 9 to 11; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, October 15 to 18.

I regret very much that I have had to pass by eight places where I was invited or where I had tentatively promised to stop for at least one meeting. I could not start any of these meetings before Labor Day, and it is essential that I be back in Los Angeles the first week in November. My highly valued Associate in this ministry, Mr. Herbert Baudistel, will leave for a three-week vacation on November 6, and it is essential that I return a few days before he leaves. In view of this the trip has been shortened two weeks from the original plans. If the friends in these places will be patient with me, I promise that I will do all I can to pay them a visit next year.

****We now have thirty outlets for our tape-recorded ministry. This means that thirty of our friends have purchased recorders and are receiving the messages as they are sent out. Many more are anxious to participate in this but have been delayed due to the fact that they must make the financial arrangements necessary in purchasing a recorder. Twenty-eight messages have been recorded. These have been specially made for this ministry, and they are being sent out on the average of one message each week. These messages are fifty minutes in length, and the use of them is free to anyone who has a recorder.

****The little pamphlet on DEALING WITH GOD is now off the press. Permit me to say that I really put my heart into the production of this pamphlet. I now seek the help of all the friends of this ministry in its careful and prayerful distribution. A free copy has been mailed to every reader of THE WORD OF TRUTH. Prices are 1 copy .15; 2 copies .25; 10 copies \$1.00; 50 copies \$4.00; 100 copies \$7.50.

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