

NEEDED TRUTH.

EDITED BY

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They read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.—
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merited, and hence also to be perfected, and only to be gained or lost during this present life. Child of God, that which you have lost you have lost for ever—lost time, lost influence, lost opportunity. Let me so lose my life here that I may find it as a thing laid up, which the judgment-seat of Christ shall reveal. My sinner's life I shall never again see, thank God! my life as a saint I shall and must see. How much of that life as a saint shall be saved the judgment-seat shall declare. Think, fellow saint! a lost life and a lost glory, or a saved life and an acquired glory. As I have got a glory through the Cross, let me take up my cross and follow Him. To do that means distinction and honour *then*, but may be extinction and dishonour *now*. Fellow-believer, count the cost of doing His will, count the bigger cost of not doing it.

“INTO ONE PLACE.”

DIFFICULTIES that arise from a misapprehension of the truth, or from a meaning given to certain words, can easily be removed when there is no determination of the will to hold certain views. But we are often not aware of the deep hold that arises from a meaning being invariably given to any sentence or verse of Scripture. Misapplied Scriptures pass current almost unchallenged at last, as the result of a constant use of them. And one is greatly amazed when it is pointed out to them how they could have read or re-read passages, always taking a wrong meaning out of them. But when it results from a defective or faulty translation, then it is more difficult to get clear. “When ye come together therefore into one place” (1 Cor. 11. 20) is a passage that at once affords an illustration of this. “One place” is supposed to refer to a special locality where persons have come together. And in the case referred to the usual

thought is, that the Christians in Corinth all came together on the first day of the week, in the same house or room—that they were all within the same "four walls," as we should say. And "one place" is considered to teach that beyond all contradiction. When once one has become imbued with this idea it is easily seen that he would be prepared to combat the teaching that although Christians in Corinth were all in one Church of God (1 Cor. 1. 1), yet they did not of necessity all break bread within the same "four walls."

No sooner would such a statement be made than it would be met with the objection, But we read, "When ye come together therefore into one place." And the objector would go on to urge that "one place" of necessity shut out such teaching until he was informed that "into one place" did not convey the true meaning of the words used in the original. Simple reference to a few passages where they are found puts it beyond dispute. They are used of those who were together as to locality; the context would show that, but the words themselves do not. If they did, then they would invariably be used only of those who were thus actually together as to "place." But the word for "place" is not found in 1 Corinthians 11. 20. *Τοπος* (topos) is the common Greek word for place; it occurs about ninety-two times in the New Testament. Our English word "Topography" contains it. As "geography" refers to writing about the earth, this word means writing about place.

Ἐπι Το Ἀυτο (Epi to auto)

are the words used in 1 Corinthians 11. 20, and there translated "into one place." Justin Martyr, in his "Second Apology," uses the words in a sentence bearing upon the act of the Christians in coming together. He wrote, "That on the day called Sunday, all that dwell in the cities or countries about meet together (epi to auto)." Surely any one

can at once see that when he wrote of cities and countries, he could not mean to say that out of all these Christians found their way to "one place." "One place" does not represent the meaning at all. Strictly speaking, there is no word for "one" or "place." But the words convey a fuller and far more important meaning. "For the same object," or "upon the same," would represent the real force of the words, and would not add to them as the translation "one place" does.

There are passages where these words occur that refer to persons or animals together in the same place. But it is the context that would prove it. These words themselves would not in any case require such a thought. And they are used where the context distinctly shows that the persons referred to were not "together" as to locality, though they were and fully so as to object. Christians might be, and often are, together as regards place, but not at all together as to object. Together as to place and yet not united! On the other hand, united because they have a common object and a consent in the same worship, although scattered over the city, and remembering the Lord in several houses or other places. I have turned up forty passages in the LXX., or Greek version of the Old Testament, where these words occur; and while in some it is evident the ones referred to were together as to locality, in others it could not by any possibility be so. Take, for instance, a passage from the Psalms: "My soul shall boast herself in the Lord, the humble shall hear *thereof* and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together (epi to auto)" (Ps. 34. 3).¹ Here it is evident that there is no possibility of bringing in the thought of place. All the humble who heard could be glad and exalt His Name, having common consent, and being at one in

¹ In quoting from Psalms or elsewhere, I give the number as found in the English Version, and not as in LXX. Ps. 34. 3, E.V., is Ps. 33. 3 in LXX.

their purpose of praising Him. The same applies to another verse: "Hear this, all *ye* people; give ear, all *ye* inhabitants of the world; both low and high, rich and poor together (*epi to auto*)" (Ps. 49. 1, 2).

When all the inhabitants of the world are named, it is sufficient to show beyond dispute that the words are used here altogether apart from any thought of locality.

"Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together" (Ps. 122. 3) in the LXX. is, "Jerusalem is built as a city whose fellowship is '*epi to auto*.'" Thus, all in the city, though dwelling in houses apart, are spoken of as "together."

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together (*epi to auto*)" (Ps. 133. 1). All Israel are here spoken of in their unity, illustrations of which are gathered from the sanctuary and from all the land. Israel occupying the land from Dan to Beersheba are yet together (*epi to auto*), not as to place, but in heart and purpose.

"They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together (*epi to auto*)" (Isa. 66. 17). Here again the words imply a common judgment upon the ungodly among the Jews, but they are spoken of as being apart locally in gardens, etc.

"In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together (*epi to auto*) out of the land of the North" (Jer. 3. 18). Thus, not one locality, but spread over the land of the North in their captivity, as they will be spread over the whole land of Palestine after their restoration.

The few passages, culled from many, will be sufficient to cite here. The words are shown to be used in the LXX. translation, exactly as they were centuries after by Justin Martyr, and as they are in the New Testament itself.

They are found in Matthew 22. 34; Luke 17. 35; Acts 1. 15, 2. 1, 2. 44, 3. 1, 4. 26; 1 Corinthians 7. 5, 11. 20, 14. 23.

"The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together (*epi to auto*) against the Lord and against His Christ" (Acts 4. 26), is a quotation from Psalm 2. 2, where in the LXX. the words also occur, and are translated "together." But when quoted in Acts 4. there is the clearest proof that they are used of those who were acting "on the same thing," or "for the same object," as the words convey, but who were not together as to place: "For of a truth against Thy holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together" (ver. 27). When the Lord Jesus was betrayed and brought before these different rulers, it was not to one place where they all were gathered, having combined together to judge Him. They led Him to Annas first (John 18. 13); after that to Caiaphas (ver. 24). After that they brought Him before Pontius Pilate (Matt. 27. 2.), who, hearing that He was of Galilee, sent Him to Herod (Luke 23. 7). Herod, having set Him at nought and mocked Him, sent Him back again to Pilate (Luke 23. 11). Caiaphas, with the Scribes and Pharisees, Herod and Pilate, were acting "*epi to auto*"—that is, "alike," in perfect agreement—yet they were not together as to place, but each remained in his own court of jurisdiction.

It may be well specially to refer to a verse in Matthew as helping to make this point clear: "But when the Pharisees had heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together" (Matt. 22. 34); "*sunēkthēsan epi to auto*" are the words used. But the verb "*sunagō*," with its prefix *sun* (preposition, with, or together with), would, in itself, convey the thought of being "gathered together" if that were all that was intended.

But when "epi to auto" is added, it is specially to point out the oneness of will and purpose, to endeavour in every possible way to silence or confuse the Lord Jesus by their questions.

The words occur again in Acts 3. 1 in the Authorized Version, but should be found at end of chapter 2. The word Church in 2. 47 is omitted in MSS. \times A, B, C., etc., and by Alford, Tregelles, Tischendorf, and Revisers (see Revised Version). "And the Lord added 'epi to auto' daily such as should be saved." Again, we find these words, "And all that believed were together (epi to auto) and had all things common" (Acts 2. 44). Here it does not refer to their coming together in assembly. There were then the three thousand just converted, as well as the apostles—a number of disciples. No one for a moment surely would seek to maintain that they all lived under one roof, and they had "all things common." But if the Scripture declares that they were, although scattered over Jerusalem, dwelling in many houses, yet "epi to auto," then certainly it could be and was equally true that they were "epi to auto," although they broke the bread locally in different parts of the city. Thus their being together, or "epi to auto," for worship, etc., was blessedly true, because schism and dissension had not yet come in, and their being in distinct parts of the city worshipping did not alter the fact. The teaching that a Church of God in New Testament times only consisted of those who actually remembered the Lord being gathered within the same four walls from time to time cannot be maintained for a moment from these words. We have but to trace their use in the passages referred to to see that they will not bear such a construction being put upon them. Dr. Owen and other early "Independents" went astray on this very point. And in their revulsion from the mere external of a World's Church, which embraced in it all parishioners, went to the

other extreme, and gave up that which is clearly taught in Scripture. The Church in a city embracing a number of local churches is not understood. And the translation "into one place" has been a leading means of obscuring the truth, as well as in helping on the erroneous idea that wherever, as to locality, Christians meet to break the bread and worship, there is a Church constituted in its completeness as to teachers and pastors, rulers, etc., and it is independent. There is another passage remaining in which these words occur that perhaps more than any other has led to this: "If therefore the whole Church be come together *into one place*" (*epi to auto*) (1 Cor. 14. 23). Surely one may say this proves there was but one single meeting-place in Corinth. The whole Church was gathered "for the same object," the words show, but they do not, as we have seen once and again, imply all being within the same four walls. And one verse in this chapter clearly shows that as to Corinth they were not: "Let your women keep silence in the churches" (ver. 34). The use of the plural shows that there were more assemblies in Corinth than one. "Let your women (those in Corinth) keep silence." The word "your" is omitted in R.V. and by leading editors, but that does not affect the question. The reference undoubtedly is to Corinth.

If any one maintains that the essential form of a Church in any city in New Testament times consisted of a single congregation, the burden of proof lies with him. As also it will be necessary to show that there never were in any city more Christians at any given time than could meet in one place. This "Congregational Church" is but a theory, an idea that has grown until many have wholly accepted it without searching as to it. And they have been helped by the words "into one place," which do not at all convey the proper meaning of the words "*epi to auto*." There were thousands of saints at one time in Jerusalem. In Corinth,

Ephesus, and other large cities there were large numbers, and not a single statement in the New Testament as to this congregational system. From it has sprung the notion that overseeing brethren could only exercise oversight or take care of those with whom they actually broke the bread within the same four walls. Yet the Apostle could write as one having "the care of all the Churches" (2 Cor. 11. 28). It is beside the mark altogether for an objector to say, "But Paul was an apostle." The capacity for the work was God-given, and He did not confine the Apostle within limits as to the exercise of the gift bestowed. So with the apostles in Jerusalem, their oversight was in connection with the Church, the one in Jerusalem. There were not, say, twelve congregational Churches, with an apostle in each, one saying to the others, "You must not interfere in our internal matters! We receive and we put away. We may intimate what we do to the other eleven Churches, but we do it, and cannot allow any interference. Our Church is complete in itself. We come together to see as to matters, and you are not expected to come." The stating such a proposition is enough to show the fallacy and absurdity of it. The apostles unitedly counselled (Acts 6. 2, 8. 14, 9. 27), etc. The Church was one, though the meeting-places were many. In the present day, however large a city may be, if you found what claimed to be a scripturally gathered assembly, and only one meeting-place, then, although, say one hundred composed it, who lived widely apart and scattered in different suburbs, and although those who professedly took oversight lived apart also, it would be admitted on all sides that they had oversight over all the hundred. But let distance at last become a difficulty, and certain of the number meet separately, then from the moment of their thus meeting they would call themselves a separate Church, and would no longer admit that brethren who had taken oversight over them possessed it

any longer. Why? Because for two hours on a Lord's Day they did not meet within the same four walls, although still gathering "epi to auto" "for the same object," and those who had taken oversight might daily in business and work come in contact with them far more than any other one.

It is not my object in this paper to deal with the subject of rule. I have only referred to it at the point where it touches the question of "the Church, the one" in the city. It is not for the purpose of controverting the opinions of others I have thus written. "Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The Church in the city was one, no matter how many places there were in which they met from time to time for worship. The fellowship of Churches of God in all cities and countries was maintained and upheld. One passed from one to another of them with a letter of commendation, unless such was unnecessary, as in the case of Paul; and there was no distinction of occasional and fixed communion, save as it resulted from occasional or fixed residence in a place: every Christian was as much in and of every Church while he was there as any who were constantly dwelling in the place.

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