

*ἀναστρέφειν*), has sometimes been taken in a more general sense: how men ought to conduct themselves, such as have to do generally with the management of God's house (so, for example, Huther). It might, no doubt, be understood in this manner; but it seems better to retain the special reference to Timothy: for, while many of the things written in the preceding portions of the epistle had respect to the conduct which men generally, especially men holding office in the Christian church, ought to maintain, their more immediate object was to instruct Timothy how *he* should himself act in the delicate and responsible position he was for the time called to fulfil at Ephesus. But even on the understanding that the special reference is to Timothy, such a rendering as this might fitly enough be given: how one ought to conduct oneself; but the other is simpler, and is to be preferred.

*God's house, which indeed is the church of the living God*—*οἶκῳ Θεοῦ, ἧτις ἐστὶν ἐκκλησία Θεοῦ ζῶντος*; the latter clause epexegetical of the former, defining more exactly what is meant by God's house. The indefinite relative *ἧτις* is in such a connection stronger than the simple relative, being employed "to introduce an especial attribute belonging to the nature of the object, its real and peculiar property, or *differentia*" (Jelf, *Gr.* § 816, 7; Ellicott on Gal. iv. 24): the house of God, namely that which is—or, which indeed is—the church of the living God. There was a necessity for this definition, as in former times the expression "house of God" had been much associated with the material fabric of the temple, which was, in a sense that nothing of like sort could be in the gospel dispensation, the habitation or dwelling-place of Deity (2 Chron. v. 14; Isa. lvi. 7; Matt. xxi. 13). But even in Old Testament times, the more enlightened believers understood that the temple, with its sacred furniture and services, was an emblem of God's fellowship with His people, who therefore were then,

as now, the only proper habitation of God on earth : hence such passages as Num. xii. 7, Isa. lxvi. 2 ; and those in which habitual communion with God is identified with dwelling in His house, Ps. xxiii. 6, xxvii. 4 ; or having God Himself for a sanctuary and dwelling-place, Ps. xc. 1, Ezek. xi. 16. There was a mutual indwelling—they in God, and God in them. But, in accordance with the spiritual character of the new dispensation, this truth is brought out more distinctly now, and that, too, in earlier parts of Scripture than in the passage before us. Thus, in Eph. ii. 20–22, the church, as composed of believing Jews and Gentiles, is represented as a glorious building, raised on Christ as the foundation : an holy temple in the Lord, or habitation of God through the Spirit. A quite similar representation is given in 1 Pet. ii. 5, iv. 17, and again in Heb. iii. 6, where, with reference to Christ as a Son in His own house, it is added : “ Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” In these passages, the house, temple, or habitation of God is plainly associated with individuals, the individuals addressed by the apostle, contemplated as in living union with Christ ; and in the strict sense it can only be predicated of such that they are God’s house ; for in their case alone is there the real link that connects the human with the divine—the spiritual habitation with the glorious inhabitant. It is the church as the *ecclesia* of God, His elect, whom He has called out of the world and gathered into His fold, that He may sustain and keep them unto life eternal. But here, as in many other passages, the apostle does not use the word in this absolute sense ; he uses it of the outstanding, organized communities of believers, viewed as the concrete realization, in this or that particular locality, of the spiritual or ideal body. This is what every one of such communities is called to be, though in reality it might be so but in part. He holds it, as it were, to its idea : if it

was worthy of the name, it was God's house, a living community of saints pervaded by the presence of the living God; and hence, *the pillar and basement of the truth* (στύλος καὶ ἐδραίωμα τῆς ἀληθείας): for, as so connected with God, it necessarily holds and bears up in the world, that with which His name and glory are peculiarly identified—the truth as it is in Jesus.

Some have sought to connect these last words, not with what precedes, but with what follows—with the mystery of godliness (so Episcopius, Mosheim, Bengel, Rosenmüller, and others, chiefly rationalistic expositors of more recent times). This, however, is against all probability, and is rejected by the great body of interpreters. It would form a most abrupt and artificial commencement were the terms *pillar* and *basement* made to begin a fresh sentence: "Pillar and basement of the truth, and confessedly great is the mystery of godliness!" Not only so, but to couple such specific terms first with a quite general epithet, *great*, and then with an object, mystery of godliness, which does not properly suit them (for with what propriety could a mystery be called a pillar?), would only be justifiable if it were impossible to find a more appropriate connection. But so far is that from being the case, that to regard them as a description of the church in her destination to maintain and exhibit before the world the testimony of divine truth committed to her keeping, is in itself a perfectly natural representation, and in accordance with what we elsewhere read of the calling of the church. Was it not the special calling of Christ Himself to bear witness to the truth, and by doing so to become the Light of the world? But in this Christ was only in a pre-eminent degree what in a measure His people, individually and collectively, should also be found. They should be, and they are, while stedfast to their profession, a basement whereon the truth may securely rest