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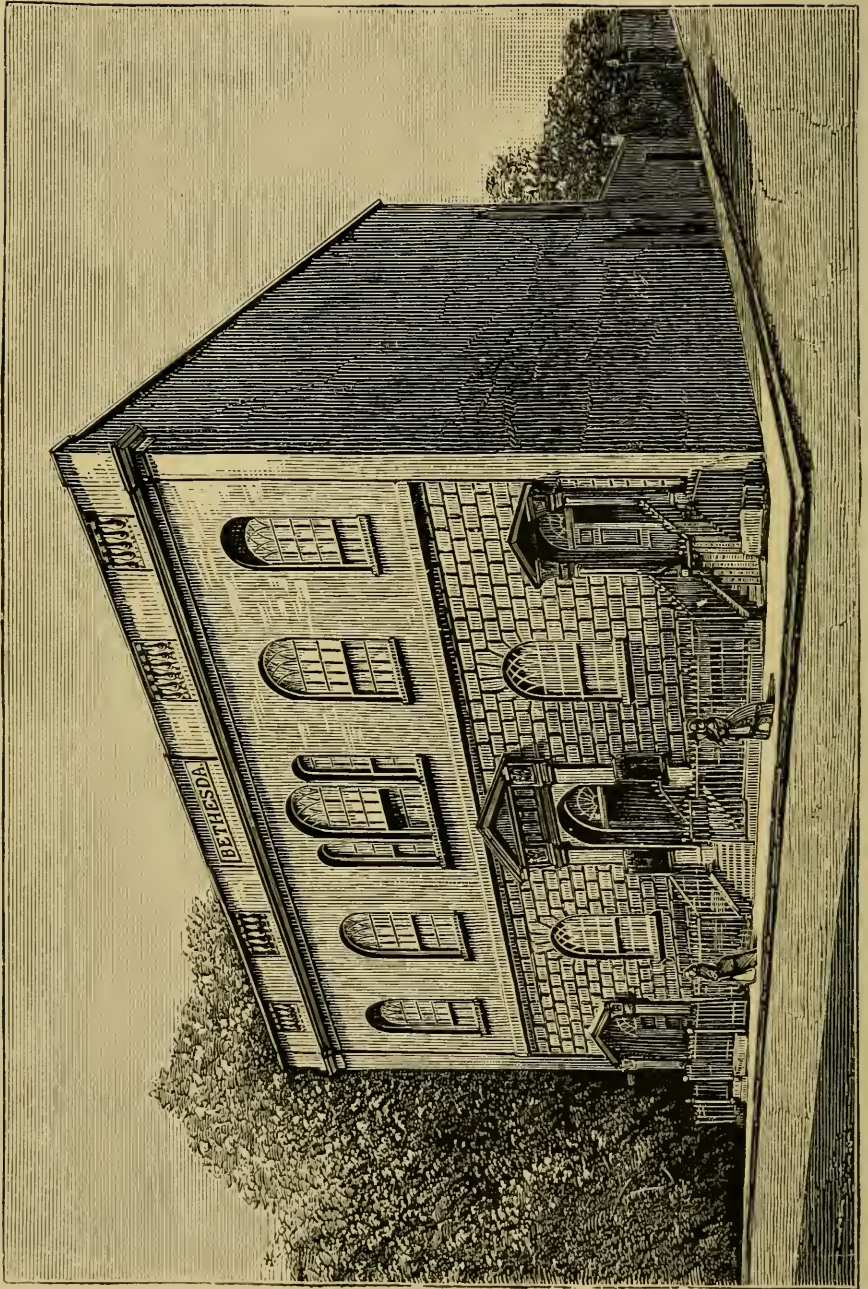
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CONVERSATIONS

ON

"BETHESDA" FAMILY MATTERS.

BY

EDWARD K. GROVES.

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NOTE.

In order to secure accuracy in the statement of facts, the present work has been submitted to some of our elder brethren, and the subject of the last chapter has been examined by four of those who passed through the "Family Sorrow." While its pages owe much to their corrections, the author is alone responsible for what it contains. The judgment of those who have kindly read and revised the work is that it will prove very helpful to believers generally.

The reader is, however, reminded that the book, from beginning to end, has been written for the believers with whom the author stands in visible Church relationship ; so that subjects have been alluded to, and a style adopted, that would not have been suitable in addressing those to whom he is personally unknown.

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“Bethesda” Family Matters.



INTRODUCTION.

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS,

During the past years of our intercourse together we have had many a talk on the subjects treated of in the following pages.

In our busy city life it so happens that we can reach but few of those who are united with us in fellowship, so as to have undisturbed conversation with them, and I have longed that when these favourable opportunities *did occur* others could have been present who were interested in the same things. If these occasions are rare among those who may be found in their own homes, they can scarcely be said to exist at all in the case of those who go to business, especially I refer to our *young men*.

Perplexed, but not in despair, I have kept a mental record of some of the most profitable conversations, and in the notes I made from time to time was able both to introduce much fresh matter, and also to im-

prove upon many an answer I had given by further study of the Word. The time has at length arrived when I can put them together, and make it possible to place in the hands of each one of our number truth that concerns us all, and for teaching which there is no suitable opportunity in any of our meetings.

It often happens that wholesome food is rejected because it is ill-prepared, and it has been a matter of the most earnest endeavour to make these pages *interesting* as well as intelligible. Many are commended to us, or have been attracted by the ministry of the Word, who know nothing of the history of this company of believers, and who *submit to*, rather than approve of, the principles of our fellowship. The following conversations are supposed to have been held with one of these, although they include subjects that were entered into by older and well instructed believers.

But there is a very weighty matter that constrains me to take the responsibility of authorship for the first time, and I will illustrate my meaning by recalling to your minds any wedding that you may have attended. The part taken by both bride and bridegroom is simple indeed. The ploughman can do his part as well as the peer when words are put into his mouth. It is often a very attractive ceremony, but the intense interest felt about it arises from the wonderful change in the future life of those who have spoken those few simple words. They can

never resume their *old* places in their respective families. New lives as well as new interests may be the result of this union.

Now, if we look at a company of believers in the Lord Jesus, assembled for the "breaking of bread," what a simple ordinance it all is. It is attractive to some from its simplicity. But what about the *after life* of those whose unity has been set forth in this act of worship? Turn to John xiii. 34, and note that it contains the responsibilities of those who had just broken bread for the first time. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." The privilege is sweet, but it brings us into a new relationship concerning which we may say as of the other, "*What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder.*"

Of course these conversations will bring out the differences that exist between ourselves and many of our fellow Christians in matters of faith and practice. If these differences have arisen from man's choice in matters of worship, the enquiry is profitless ; but if an earnest endeavour to walk only, and in all things, according to the written Word, is that which makes us to differ, surely it is right that every one of us should be able to reply to the question, "What mean ye by this service?" (Ex. xii. 26.)

The principal object, then, of the following pages is to help—*firstly*, in the understanding of our privi-

leges, and *secondly*, in taking up the duties that the Lord has linked with these privileges.

Few can have been long in our midst, without at least hearing of some whose worship resembles our own, but who are estranged from us in consequence of the part taken by "Bethesda" in a controversy that occurred upwards of six and thirty years ago.

The majority of those in fellowship know little or nothing of this *Family sorrow*, and at first sight it appears as if "ignorance were bliss," and that our wisest course would be to let that ignorance continue: but once and again our brethren have had to mourn over the abrupt withdrawal from fellowship of some of our number, and that without a word of explanation or a single inquiry.

That some one has been exercising their consciences on "the Question," as it is called, is all that we can discover, and thus our conscience has become exercised on the duty of bringing before you the simple truth concerning this solemn matter.

But more than this, the position claimed by our Exclusive Brethren, the remarkable growth of their body, the still more remarkable development of their principles, together with the sad events now taking place amongst them, sorrowful alike to us and to them, call for more than a passing notice, linked as they are with our past history.

It would be as hard to count the flowers that a bee sucks, in order to fill one cell with honey, as for me

to reckon up all the dear brethren whose words may be found in the explanations of matters of *doctrine*.

In translating the theory of church work (if I may so call it) into *practice*, my principal teacher has been our valued brother, G. FRED. BERGIN, with whom I have had the happiness of being linked in service from the first day until now.

If the study of these pages shall lead any to esteem the yoke which our Master has called us to share with Himself, no longer a cross to be shunned, but a prize to be fought for, it will be a rich reward to

Your own brother,

EDWARD K. GROVES.

Bristol, 1885.

The Family History.

Brother.—How glad I am to meet you. Tell me if you begin to feel at home among us now?

Enquirer.—It is scarcely six months since I came to Bristol, and I have not made as much progress as I expected, but I think it would greatly help me if some one would be kind enough to tell me a little of the history of Bethesda, and explain also those peculiarities in worship, &c., which I have learned to put up with for the sake of the truth I find in your midst.

B.—By all means would I help you, but as our enquiries embrace two distinct subjects, will you choose which we shall begin to talk about?

E.—Well, first give me the history of the *building*, and we will proceed from the less to the greater. How did it come into its present occupation?

B.—It was built in 1819 for Mr. Cowan, a clergyman, who was excluded from the Church of England. For many years he was a most popular preacher, but fell into error, which resulted in the breaking up of his congregation, and he finally left Bristol. It happened to be vacant in 1832, when Mr. George Müller and Mr. Henry Craik first visited Bristol.

E.—What were the circumstances that led them to take it?

B.—After paying the city a visit some weeks previously, these two devoted men came to reside here in May, 1832. They had both preached at Gideon Chapel, in the East End of Bristol, and were then invited by those connected with the place to minister there. This they agreed to do provided there was no fixed pastoral relationship between them—no salary nor pew rents. Within a month of their entering upon this service, large numbers attended their ministry, and a Christian gentleman offered to be responsible for the rent of Bethesda for twelve months if they would enter upon its occupation. On the 6th of July they held their first service there, and on the 13th of the following month one brother and four sisters united with them in church fellowship.

E.—It was then a branch of Gideon Chapel?

B.—No, it stood on quite a different footing. The Christians who met at Gideon were connected with the Independents. The majority knew nothing of believers' baptism, and on various other points differed from what George Müller and Henry Craik had learned from the Word of God to hold and to teach. They gave their services at Gideon, as there was a hungering after the gospel there, but were never exactly identified with them. The half dozen, who, uniting with them, formed the beginning of the Church at Bethesda, were baptized believers, holding the hope of the Lord's coming, and the *same principles of worship*. In a few weeks, after due instruction, the services became what are known as "Open Meetings."

E.—Then it was not an existing Baptist Church that embraced what are commonly known as Brethren's principles?

B.—No.

E.—Was a member of Gideon also a member of Bethesda?

B.—Not at first. The two companies were united in 1837, and the result of their union was to bring to the surface the difference of judgment that existed in many spiritual matters. It led to Messrs. Müller and Craik giving up their connection with Gideon in 1840, after ministering there for a period of eight years.

E.—How did their leaving affect the congregation?

B.—The original members continued to occupy their old seats, but out of 250 who were added to the number during their ministry only three remained after they left.

E.—Was Bethesda found large enough?

B.—A chapel was taken in Callow Hill Street before Gideon was given up, but an accident happening to the building made another move necessary, and in October, 1842, Salem, the chapel not far from the Drawbridge, was taken.

E.—Do tell me about the accident at Callow Hill Street Chapel; was it a fire?

B.—No, but one that might have been more disastrous. The whole roof fell in early one Sunday morning, before the meeting assembled.

E.—How many, including those connected with

Gideon, were brought to the Lord through the testimony of these remarkable men ?

B.—Upwards of 800 within those eight years.

E.—What think you was the secret of their success ?

B.—That they lived as they taught, and with the most differing gifts acted with oneness of purpose. Speaking of the uninterrupted love and union existing between himself and his beloved brother, friend, and fellow labourer, Mr. Müller writes:— “There is not one point of importance as regards the truth on which we differ. In judgment, as to matters connected with the welfare of the saints among whom we labour, we have been almost invariably *at once* of one mind.”

E.—Do you consider then that their partnership in service had a great deal to do with the blessing that attended it ?

B.—Most unquestionably. They fulfilled the Master’s will in so doing. When He sent forth the first preachers of the gospel, it was not singly, but two and two. When He further commissioned other seventy also, again it was *two and two*. When by the Holy Ghost, the assembled apostles were charged to separate from their number some for special service to the Gentiles, *two* are linked together. The happiest condition for the messengers, the best for those who receive the message, the soundest basis for permanent gospel service is—*Two* and *Two*.

Recognising this scriptural direction—determining to wait upon God to enable them thus unitedly to serve Him, they continued from year to year, and He was pleased to put more abundant honour upon

them, and so to teach His children through them one secret of effectual service.

E.—Were both these servants of God supported by the voluntary contributions of those to whom they ministered ?

B.—To a small extent this was the case, but by far the larger portion of their temporal maintenance came to their hands through other channels ; often from sources entirely unknown.

E.—Were they not, however, *the pastors* of the Church, and in this important respect more allied to Dissenters than to those called “ Brethren ” ?

B.—Only in appearance. They received appointment neither from the few nor the many, but their willing service was recognised by those among whom they laboured.

E.—But was not the ministry of the Word entirely in their hands ?

B.—In the earlier years such was the case. There is nothing contrary to the mind of Christ in two of His disciples continually teaching and preaching what they have learned of Him. The harm *is* when the Pastor or the Church prevent others from exercising a like privilege, although qualified of the Lord. So far from acting in this spirit, George Müller and Henry Craik, as far back as 1832, gave very plain proof to the contrary.

E.—By what means ?

B.—There had been boxes *for the ministry* in each of the chapels, the contents of which they up to that

time received : but they had these boxes removed, and incurred, as we should say, the risk of losing much of the customary free-will offerings of those to whom they ministered. Why? Simply because there were now others used of the Lord for edifying and caring for His people, and they would rather depend on Him entirely for the supply of their daily need, than exclude others from being helped and upheld as they had been.

E.—Well, to be sure ! That does seem like being too conscientious. Of course there would be many who desired to give to them as before. It would be quite an inconvenience to have no boxes for their offerings.

B.—There were boxes for the “poor,” and also for “expenses,” and all the loose money that was put into these went for the purpose named on the box. If, however, any gift was intended for them or other helpers, or for any missionary or gospel work, the coin had to be wrapped in paper, and the name of the person or object written thereon. It might then be dropped into any of the boxes, and the brethren, who had the keys, undertook to apply it as addressed, which practice, I may add, continues unto this day.

E.—By-the-by, I should be glad to know how it is that the places we meet in are all called *chapels*, whereas in other places I hear that “Brethren” have a particular dislike to the designation.

B.—That I can do with very little difficulty. It was an empty “chapel” that Messrs. “Müller and Craik

had offered to them at Teignmouth, and many souls were born of God through the Word they ministered within its walls. Again, it was a *chapel*, that had a congregation but no pastor, that first bid them welcome to Bristol, and God was with them and wrought mightily in that chapel too. Then it was the chapel built for Mr. Cowan that was open for them to take, and though it was not all arranged as they would have arranged the interior, neither pulpit, gallery, nor pews proved any hindrance to blessing. The Lord's presence and saving grace continued to be felt, and so it comes to pass that the Bristol brethren are not the least bit afraid of the word, but continue to use it and apply it to those buildings that they have since that time occupied.

E.—What makes some “Brethren” so averse to the term?

B.—I think, in their earnest desire to return to the simplicity of Scripture;—the term “upper room” where the Apostles met was regarded as a hint to them to seek similar accommodation, forgetting the fact of their being then in “fear of the Jews.” Hence the most desirable feature to their mind, in a place of worship, was the impossibility of distinguishing it from any of the surrounding buildings.

E.—Is there anything in the word itself or its origin to which they could conscientiously object?

B.—I do not think the *origin* of the word is at all to the purpose in this case, because it has no more connection with what is generally understood by the title than the term “upper room” has.

E.—What was the word “chapel” first used to express?

B.—Opinions differ as to whether it was the ante-room of the Cathedral where the Cardinal kept his hat, or the canopy that covered the Host. The meaning of the word to-day, as generally understood, is, “A building where God is worshipped,” and it has this advantage over the modern use of the word church that it is never confounded with those who occupy it.

E.—How *could* the meaning of a word come to be so changed?

B.—It is a common thing in our language. Would you believe that the word “school” originally meant “leisure.” About 3,000 years ago some one set up a school in Greece for the first time, and as it was only the wealthy, who had no cause to use their hands in earning their bread, that could attend it, so these men of “leisure,” or “scholee,” as the Greek word goes, formed the first “school.”

E.—But now I am going to change the subject, and ask you to explain to me if you can, if there is not something very irregular in the formation of a church such as you have described—having no connection with existing denominations, nor controlled by any Christian government? I do not ask this as uneasy about it myself; but I should like to be able to answer those who say we consider ourselves better than all other Christians, and that we have only added another to the many schisms of Christendom. Is not the Church on earth divided enough as it is?

B.—Do you recollect such an expression as the “Church on Earth” in the Word of God?

E.—No, not at this moment, but the idea is most familiar to me, and it must be to you.

B.—I am sadly used to it, and believe that the words serve to express confusion of mind as to Church truth. I state advisedly that the Spirit of God nowhere calls *all saints alive on the earth at any given time* the Church of Christ, and *that* is the idea conveyed by the words “The Church on earth” which is so frequently on Christian lips.

E.—Then in what sense or senses is the word “Church” used in Scripture?

B.—As applied to believers in the Lord Jesus, it is found only in two senses, and the first two passages in which it occurs illustrate these senses. The Lord Himself uses the word in each case. Firstly: “*Upon this Rock I will build My Church.*” (Matt. xvi. 18.) Here the word includes the whole family of the redeemed—those departed to be with Christ, those now upon earth, and those yet to be brought in till He come again. The second instance is found in the words, “*Tell it unto the Church.*” (Matt. xviii. 17.) Here it describes the company of believers gathered in His name in any place—Christ is the Head of the one, and He is the Head of the other. One is called His body, so is the other; but the first as a whole is without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing, whereas the second is always found with more or less of evil, and failure; the Church in the latter sense, at one time is seen increasing, at another diminishing, and sometimes removed altogether.

E.—And do you affirm that the word is confined to these two meanings in the New Testament ?

B.—There is one instance of its use in describing the children of Israel in the wilderness, where it is thus translated, and this is the word describing the concourse of idolaters at Ephesus.*

E.—You don't mean to say that the Ephesian *mob*, who, for the most part knew not why they were come together, is designated by the *word Church* ?

B.—Yes. The word Church means : *The called out ones*. Demetrius, the silversmith, *called out* those in the first instance whose private interests were affected by Paul's preaching, and their united shout, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," had the effect of *calling out* all her votaries from the streets and lanes of the city. Lastly, the Town Clerk appeased the excited crowd by reminding them of those *called out* to give judgment in such cases as the present, and so this heathen "*Church*" was dismissed.

E.—But it seems so strange that such a common word should be used by the Lord to express His body, that which is so dear to Himself.

B.—And yet this is what we find all through the New Testament. The Holy Ghost does not always invent new words, but sanctifies those existing in the language to His own use, and our business is to find by comparing Scripture with Scripture, what the new and exalted meaning is.

* The expression, robbers of "churches," occurring in this passage, is really robbers of *temples*.

E.—So the “Church in the wilderness” means those whom God had *called out* of Egypt?

B.—Exactly ; and the coming out from surroundings that are not of God ought to be the character of the Church of God in its local sense.

E.—Is not the Church still further brought down to describe a godly household? We read of the Church in Philemon’s house.

B.—The word Church *in* a person’s house is always to be understood as *at* a person’s house, implying that the assembly of believers in that place was held there.

E.—I never knew that before ; but tell me how we are to distinguish between the perfect and the imperfect Church that you spoke of just now.

B.—Throughout the Epistle to the Ephesians the word Church is in the sense of Matthew xvi. ; also in Colossians i. 18 and 24, and Hebrews ii. 12, and xii. 23. In all other places, with the exceptions already noticed, the word Church is used in the sense of Matt. xviii. Its privileges, responsibilities, and failures, are fully set forth in the Epistles to the Corinthians.

E.—But I cannot see how you would understand, “The Church of the living God—the pillar and ground of truth,” in any other sense than as the whole company of the saints on earth. (1 Tim. iii. 15.)

B.—Look at the context. Is not the Church described as a place or sphere where Timothy’s behaviour could be seen and profited by? If this is not sufficient to satisfy your mind turn to Acts xx. 28,

here the very company of believers among whom we find Timothy, in the passage you quoted, is styled, "*The Church of God.*"

E.—Yes ; but I must take time to consider and see whether "*The Church on Earth*" is an unscriptural idea.

B.—By all means do so. I may here mention that the word Church in the sense of a local assembly of believers occurs ninety-six times. The last use of it, in the last chapter of the Bible, is emphatically this. All the other instances of the use of this word have been already noticed.*

E.—Well, after all, how does it affect the question I first put to you concerning the charge brought against us of adding another to the many divisions that already exist. Did not our Lord pray that "*they all may be one*, as Thou Father art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us ; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me, . . . and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me" : and was not the Church at Jerusalem an exhibition of this in the apostles' days?

B.—I have here three questions to deal with : Our

* I am indebted to the researches of our Brother Alexander Grant, missionary at Singapore, for valuable information on the use of this important word. The critical reader will find the Revised Version renders Acts ix. 31 : "So the Church throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified." The word *Church* seems here applied to a number of local assemblies, but for the distributive preposition *throughout*. For instance, in the sentence, "The police throughout Europe were put doubly upon their guard," does not imply that they formed *one organization*, but that in *each city* they were on the alert.

Lord's prayer in the seventeenth of John ; the condition of the early Church ; and our present position in relation to fellow Christians. (This last subject I must defer taking up till I have said something about the first two.)

First : "That they all may be one." Yes, the Lord delights in seeing His people *one*, whatever place He has gathered them into. But how is His blessed will to be fulfilled? There are three ways of producing unity : Satan's way, the world's way, and the Holy Spirit's way.

E.—What are they?

B.—*Satan's way* is to assume divine authority, and force every one to bow to and accept all he teaches. Such is Popery.

The World's way is compromise. The truth of God and obedience to His word are made matters of arrangement. "You allow me to hold this, and I will allow you to hold that. I grant you liberty in this direction, you do me the same favour in another."

The Holy Spirit's way is by forming Christ in each believer. Their union is then not the result of external pressure or mutual exertion, but by reason of the same Christ dwelling in both.

Why does the ear of corn in New Zealand, and also in California, resemble that growing in our own fields? Because their source and nature are one.

E.—If I understand the drift of what you are saying, it comes to this ; that it is only when we resemble Christ that we can be truly one, and that all our attempts at unity, if we are not ourselves up to the standard, are worthless. Is not that verse in

Philippians "let your *moderation* be known to all men," to be understood as let your *yieldingness* be known unto all men, and if so are matters of religion excluded?

B.—Yield everything that belongs to self; but yield nought that belongs to God. If the Lord said, during the last days of the reign of the law of Moses, that whosoever should break one of its least commandments and teach men so, should be called least in the kingdom of heaven; what would He say to those who would *yield* instead of *keep* His own precious words. But to return to the subject we were considering. You said truly enough that the Church at Jerusalem was an exhibition of the oneness that the Lord desired. Let us examine the picture, as we have it put before us in the Word. During the feast of Pentecost, Jerusalem contained, besides its usual inhabitants, a large influx of visitors, or pilgrims. They were of Jewish faith, but spoke various languages, and many had travelled from distant countries. After attending to certain ceremonies, and assembling in the temple to worship, they would have returned whence they came, no more linked together than the crowds who attend a festival of modern times. Now mark the result of Peter's preaching the gospel to this vast and motley throng on that memorable day. Their attention and interest were roused by each man hearing the message in his native language.

In 3,000 of them *Christ was formed by the Holy Spirit*. Tears of repentance were followed by the inexpressible joy of sin forgiven, and the assurance of everlasting life. But further, without a word of

exhortation to that effect, or revelation given, this company found out that they *belonged to each other*. A host of rival and once deadly hating parties of Jews and proselytes thus became the first Christian FAMILY, and continued stedfastly learning the same lessons the apostles gladly taught them, sharing each others wealth, breaking bread at the same table, and joining in the same prayers.

The Church at Jerusalem was a vast family, but I make especial note of this, that the grace in the individual members was vast in the same proportion.

E.—Should you think that their oneness of heart and soul must have filled the apostles with astonishment?

B.—Yes, when they remembered the slow progress *they* had made in this direction, with the Master Himself in their midst, for three long years. The twelve whom the Lord chose that they might be *with Him*, as Mark says, were His immediate family circle; supplied from the same purse, eating the same food, travelling and resting in the same places; entertained by some, and rejected by others, they had continually before them the purest pattern of unselfish love. Yet how often did they grieve His spirit by the strife, "Who should be greatest?" The last supper found them doing the same thing; and now they saw the wealthy merchant and landowner hastening to their feet with the riches they had lately esteemed above everything else, in order to serve those who were in need. If ever those words of the Lord had a crowning fulfilment, "The works that I do, shall he do also, and greater works than

these shall he do, because I go unto my Father," it was on that eventful day. Have you ever noticed how the apostles appear to cling together in true family character, till the latest mention we have of them in the book of Acts?

E.—No, I had not noticed it, but I am impatient to hear what you have to say on the third point of enquiry—Our share in the present divided condition of the Churches of God.

B.—As the word *division* has such a prominent place in your thought, may I ask you from whom the Church, meeting at Bethesda, divided or separated itself? Have we not seen that its existence may be traced to the labours of two servants of God, who preached Christ neither out of strife nor contention, but where He had placed before them an open door? Is it not according to the pattern in which Churches were planted in the Apostles' days?

E.—But with this marked difference, that it is not only the unconverted that are brought in, but members of other Churches existing in the same place.

B.—We are not to be charged with causing division when the truth preached among us attracts those who find less truth elsewhere.

E.—Then would you think it Scriptural for there to be a hundred Churches, in the New Testament sense of the word, in such a city as Bristol?

B.—Yes, and for the following reasons:—

1st. The circumstance in connection with which the "Church" is spoken of by the Lord in the passage,

“Tell it unto the Church,” clearly indicates it as the assembly to whom the man is *known*.

2nd. The practical care of, and interest in one another, set forth in the 12th of 1st Corinthians, and other passages, form the very essence of our church relationship; and if the numbers were so large as to make the very existence of one part of the Church unknown to the other, the family character is lost, and decay is setting in.

3rd. The word in 1 Corinthians xiv. 23—“If the whole Church be cometogether into one place”—keeps up the idea of an assembly that *could be sheltered* under one roof, listen to the words of one man, and give at the same time full scope for the exercise of all the gift there is among them.

4th. While there is the fullest direction for all who are gathered together into Church fellowship being subject one to another, and being of one mind and judgment, there is not any direction for the subjection of one assembly to the rule and guidance of another among the Churches of the Gentiles.

E.—I don't think the expression that you used about *decay* setting in is Scriptural.

B.—I confess it is not, but what I want to draw your special attention to is, that the “Church” condition which any of us occupy is after all only God's *temporal* arrangement for us.

The Church of to-day or to-morrow will not stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ as an assembly, but each of the members will. It is not to the Church that overcometh the reward is promised, but to *him* that overcometh. The Churches into which the

Lord would gather His children are so many training schools for His service here and hereafter ; and instead of being occupied with how far we can extend the influence, or maintain the dignity of that spiritual family connection into which we have been brought let us rather look to it that it comes up to the standard the Lord has put before us. So shall it not become corrupt.

E.—The meaning of the word “ Church ” as the called-out-assembly, points, as you said, to their separation from the *world* ; but might not those who were well disposed to the truth be admitted to Church-membership with a view to its doing them good ?

B.—Where is our authority for so doing in the Word ? What blessing can be looked for by persuading a man that he is, what he is not ? Suppose the House of Commons were occupied one night, not only by the members, but also by their friends, and these took part in the debates, would it be recorded as a meeting of the House ? Certainly not. Because the matters have been dealt with by others than those “ called out ” by the nation as its representatives.

E.—That is true, but then anybody can find out who are and who are not members of the House of Commons, but how can we be certain who are and who are not members of Christ’s body ?

B.—If any confess to have received pardon for sin through the blood of Christ, and bow to the authority of the Word of God, whose profession is not contradicted by their walk, it is His will that they should be received into the Church of Christ in any place, nor

does the fact of some of these afterwards proving false discredit such Church ; but where individuals are received without our applying the tests the Lord has given us to try those who profess to be His called out ones, what right has such an assembly to call itself a Church of God ?

E.—Is not that however very commonly done ?

B.—Alas, it is, but we have not far to look in order to know what God's thoughts are on the introduction into the assembly of those who were not led to seek it purely out of love to Christ. The case of Ananias and Sapphira furnishes us with a solemn example of this. Not that we have any right to argue that because they were suddenly cut off they could not have been children of God ; any more than we should dare to say so of the disobedient prophet in 1 Kings xiii. It is evident, however, that they acted from *mixed motives*, and the closing verses of the preceding chapter seem to show that they desired that the estimation in which Barnabas was rightly held (who had sold *all* his property and laid the *entire* sum at the Apostle's feet) should be extended to them who had only laid down a *part*. If this be hateful in the eyes of God what must their act be who give no evidence whatever of love to His Son, and yet seek to be numbered with His children.

E.—We read as the effect of the Divine judgment, that “ of the rest, no man durst join them.”

B.—In Church matters, quality is everything, quantity nothing : if you understand what I mean. Every precept is given to raise the character of the

Lord's "called out" ones; not a single word is given them in any epistle how to increase their numbers. Why? Is it because the Lord does not delight in such increase, or give it as a token of His blessing? No; but because it would lead us to open the door to those that are not His, though they have their own reasons for seeking to be numbered with His people.

E.—Before leaving the subject of the Church, there is a question I want to put regarding its meaning in its higher sense, that of Matt. xvi. I have heard that one especial feature of "Brethren's teaching" is, that the Old Testament saints cannot be included in that of which the Lord said: "*I will build, &c.*"

B.—I once held this strongly, but it is one of the things I have gradually unlearned, and I will give you my reasons. To begin with the text you have referred to. Do you not remember that Solomon's temple (such a wonderful type of the Church of Christ) was composed of stones and timber already prepared? So had the Old Testament saints, who, by faith, overcame the world (even as those who came after), been accumulating; but until Christ, as the living stone in Resurrection, was laid, the edifice could not be put together. Nay, more, there is still the preparing of "costly stones" going on, and the "*I will build,*" I take it, is yet future. In one "mighty moment," as Henry Dyer says, when Christ who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory. Every stone will instantly be put in its place.

E.—But does it not say in Ephesians ii., that we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and

prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone? Is not *that* the idea of a building now going on?

B.—Remember, the foundation was in heaven, and the stones on earth when this was spoken. An architect as he comes upon the ground where the materials are all collected for an edifice, may show you his plan, and say: “This course of pennant stones are built on that course of granite;” at least so I understand the verse.

E.—Give me some more of the Scripture which caused you to relinquish this view.

B.—In Galatians iii., we read: “So they that are of faith are blessed WITH faithful Abraham.” Not through, or by, but WITH. Is not the father of the faithful, the friend of God, linked with His spiritual children in blessing? Then, again, Hebrews xi. 40, “God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” Does not the Apostle show us, who also look for a better country, that is an heavenly, that all these old Testament saints he has been speaking of, are to wait for their reward in the glory until our number is made up and added to theirs?

E.—Now I just thought of a text that is used the other way. Matt. xi. 11, speaking of John the Baptist, the Lord says: “He that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he.” Does that mean that the position and privilege of the least one in the present dispensation exceeds that of the greatest in the old?

B.—Well, if I give you my thoughts about this passage, you must clearly understand that I do not

wish you to receive them as what is generally received among us, but simply as my individual judgment. In the original, the word "least" is "lesser." (See margin in the Revised Version of this text.) Now there is a vast difference between saying, one tree is lesser than another, and saying it is the least of trees. So the one indicated by the lesser in the kingdom of heaven is intended to lead to a comparison with some one else in the kingdom.

Now turn with me to John v. 18. It has nothing to do with the subject itself, but there is an expression used of our Lord there I would draw your attention to: "Because He had . . . broken the sabbath." Did the Lord really break one of the Ten Commandments? No, but He had done so in the "*estimation of the Jews.*" Now, in the "*estimation of the Jews,*" John the Baptist was held *to be a prophet indeed*; whereas, the Lord Jesus, as the friend of the Publicans and Sinners, was despised by many, especially the Pharisees; and I think the Lord declares Himself, who was esteemed "The lesser in the kingdom of heaven," to be greater than John the Baptist. I find that Chrysostom held the same view.

E.—Is there any other text which would prove the Old Testament saints to form part of the Church?

B.—In James i. 18, we read "of His own will begat He us, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures." Now the Spirit of God is clearly addressing the saints of the present dispensation. If we then are described as "first fruits," must not those whom God begat *before* us form part of the sheaf gathered in before the fulness of millennial blessing?

E.—True, but then Abraham and his seed are to possess the earth, while those gathered now have no promises of an earthly character.

B.—Precisely, as the Levites had no lot with their brethren; the Lord God made their inheritance, but they, together with the other tribes, were called the people of God. May there not be a distinction of service in the millennial dispensation, and yet both be blended in the ages to come? Is not the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God—to which, we are told, Abraham's eyes were directed—the same as that which makes our eyes sparkle when we read Revelation xxi.? The marriage supper of the Lamb is not spread yet, and we have not found that the confident expectation of filling the chief seats *there* has been helpful to humble walking *here*. The privilege belongs to "Brethren" of having dug up and brought to light truth of unspeakable value to the saints of God: and this leads not a few to esteem *all* that they have dug up and exposed to be alike precious. Against this going into extremes—so natural to the human mind—we have again and again to be set on our guard.

NOTE.—It may be that the arguments in connection with the Old Testament saints, at the close of this chapter, fail to move the contrary conviction of many dear children of God. Let it not be understood for a moment that this is a controversial work. It is nothing of the kind. It is the result of an earnest endeavour on behalf of the many to whom the writer has a personal responsibility—to reply to the eager questions that a few only have had the opportunity of asking—but which he has again and again found that numbers seek to know. Allowing, for the sake of argument, that in this and other cases he and some of his fellow-labourers are in error, is it not more honest that our real convictions should be known, and we estimated accordingly; than that we should fear to state what we believe to be the meaning of the Word of God?

The Family Worship.

E.—I wish you would next explain to me what has led to those differences in worship between ourselves and those around us, especially I refer to the meeting on the Lord's day morning.

B.—First of all I should like to know if we are agreed as to whom we should seek to please in the matter of worship—God or man?

E.—God, of course.

B.—Secondly, from what source alone can we obtain reliable information as to how to please Him?

E.—From His Word.

B.—Lastly, are we safe in allowing any thought or tradition of man to guide us in this?

E.—Well, I am not prepared to answer this question, for there are surely many points on which our own sense of what is becoming, or what godly men have adopted in days gone by, that must come in to fill up what Scripture is silent about.

B.—Then I think I may say that a different judgment as to how far this should be allowed, lies at the root of those differences you ask me to explain.

E.—Do you then maintain that the New Testament furnishes us with directions for acceptable worship that need no modification in the present day?

B.—Yes, mainly so, and the subject shall have our immediate attention. The worship described in the New Testament, by which we seek to order our own, is only possible for believers; and if taken audible part in by the unconverted, would lead to utter confusion.

E.—You don't mean that Christians should worship with closed doors?

B.—Certainly not. Unbelievers in the meeting are not only provided for, but we could not expect blessing if they were excluded, as their *witnessing* our worship is one means the Lord uses for their conversion. (See 1 Cor. xiv. 25).

E.—How can you guard against the possibility of an unconverted person taking part in it?

B.—By exercising constant care in admitting none into fellowship but those whom the Lord has received, according to the tests that He has laid down for our guidance, our part is fulfilled; and our experience has been that He has not suffered our worship to be so disturbed.

E.—Now will you tell me where you find the whole subject of the worship of a company of believers treated of in the New Testament?

B.—Turn to the eleventh chapter of the 1st Corinthians and the 17th verse, and read on through the twelfth and thirteenth chapters to the end of the

fourteenth. *Do this before proceeding further.* The apostle begins by correcting evil practices that existed at the Lord's table (1 Cor. xi. 17); goes on to describe the distribution of gifts in the body by the Spirit. (1 Cor. xii.) Then He insists upon the spiritual condition of love unfeigned between the members. (1 Cor. xiii.) Lastly, the meeting is described, the outline of which serves as our guide. (1 Cor. xiv.)

E.—Why! the fourteenth chapter is chiefly about the gift of tongues which no longer exists.

B.—It has passed away, and so have the gifts of healing and working of miracles; but the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in that which remains (relating to the essentials of worship), are sufficient for all our wants.

E.—But do you think there is any reason to conclude that, as the gifts so largely spoken of in this chapter no longer exist, it can be a model in other respects to be safely copied? Can the Holy Spirit be said to be present now as He was then?

B.—As it was ordained "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father," so was it ordained that the Spirit should be honoured as the Son. (See Matt. xii. 32.)

We observe that the Son of God came down on this earth to carry out a certain work on our behalf. He finished it perfectly, and having returned to the right hand of God, sent the Holy Spirit in the full exercise of those miraculous powers He had so lately manifested. About the time of the completion of the canon of Scripture, we find those works cease, so that

we conclude that the Spirit's work through the medium of those in whom these miraculous gifts were present, was also *perfectly finished* : though His constant work of renewing souls, and taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to us continues. In this sense He is as much present now as He was then.

E.—Will you go through the chapters you have referred to, and point out the directions that apply to the worship of an assembly of Christians?

B.—I will. But before doing so, let me say a little about *worship* itself, as everything depends upon our having the reality in our hearts as we assemble together. The principal word used in the New Testament, of which this is a translation, occurs sixty times, and is never rendered by any word but *worship*. It is used by our Lord in the fourth of John, both to describe what the Father seeks, and what the Samaritans ignorantly offered. It occurs twenty-four times in the Revelation, and is applied to our Lord in all the Gospels where He is its object. Like the word "church," it existed long before the Holy Spirit took it and hallowed it, and the *loving regard* which it implied in its original form is still maintained. It was the *silent worship* of the woman of Samaria that drew forth those words of our Lord : "I have meat to eat that ye know not of ;" and it was the *silent worship* of Mary of Bethany that the Master would not suffer to be disturbed.

These two women differed widely, both in character and position, but as worshippers they were one. *They had neither eyes nor ears for aught but Him.* Silence is not a necessary condition of worship, nor solitude.

The joyous heart and the sorrowful one can unite in prayer and praise, but in each case *the Lord's thoughts toward us*, as revealed by His Spirit in His Word, fill the soul.*

E.—Then has confession no place in worship?

B.—Indeed it has, and yet what I have said is true. Do you know what the word means?

E.—Confession is our making known the sins of which we have been guilty; and bringing to the light evil that may never have been suspected.

B.—That is indeed the general meaning of the word; but such is not the meaning of the word used in the New Testament.

E.—You astonish me! I wonder what you will tell me next?

B.—“To confess” throughout the New Testament means “*To say the same thing* ;” or in one word, to *acknowledge*. It implies that God or man has laid something to my charge, or declared to me some fact, and I bow to the charge and accept the fact. It does not mean my disclosing to another what he knew not before.

E.—Indeed! Then the Confessional, which is so fast gaining ground in England, has no Scripture authority whatever?†

* There are five other words translated worship besides the one we are considering. Three have kindred meaning. In Luke xiv. 10, for *worship* read *glory* (or honour, as in the phrase “I thee worship,” in English marriage service), and in Acts xvii. 25, for *worshipped* read *served*.

† It is not for a moment sought to prove that we should not reveal a wrong done against another to him if he is unconscious of it—but only to state what the meaning of the word used in Scripture *really is* to which we have been accustomed to attach such an idea.

B.—None whatever. But now let me clear away any difficulty you may have in connection with the blessed text, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, &c.”

These sins may for the most part be unknown to, or unsuspected by those around us, but is that the case between the soul and the One to whom it has made confession?

E.—No, for “He understandeth our thoughts afar off.”

B.—Exactly. Then the confession spoken of in this verse is our *acknowledgement of the Lord's thoughts about us and our ways*, because the candle of *His Word* has made them clear to our souls.

E.—As you have explained the spiritual side of worship, will you come to the external or visible part of the subject, as set forth in the chapters to which you have referred me?

B.—First of all we are taught what is *right* by the way the apostle deals with what is *wrong*—just as we owe the glorious fifteenth chapter of the same epistle to the fact that there were actually some in the Church who denied the resurrection of the dead.

E.—Yes. What a profanation there seems to have been of the Lord's table. Now if the administration of the Lord's supper was entrusted to the hands of the leading elder or bishop, and he was a true man of God, no such scandal could have occurred.

B.—But you see the Apostle did not make any such arrangement. He reverently rehearses all that the

Lord had said to him on the subject. The words in Matt. xxvi. 27, "Drink ye all of it," were uttered by the Master as He passed the cup round the table at which they were all seated. The bread and the wine were shared by the disciples as they received it from each other's hands; and whatever evil Satan might have caused the Corinthians to fall into, by yielding to their fleshly appetites, the remedy is not found in swerving from that which they had received of the Lord, and putting it all into the hands of one man; but in examining themselves and so coming to His table.

E.—But at the institution of the Supper, the Lord Himself was present, and the bread and wine came direct from His hands.

B.—And in every case where the ordinance is rightly observed, the Lord Himself is present, and our faith is called upon to take the bread and wine as it were from His hands. The "*breaking of bread*" is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, as that which the disciples gathered together to do on the first day of the week as a household of faith. No man's name or office is linked with the observance; and he who gives thanks, and distributes the bread and wine, acts as an elder member of the family serving the rest, not as a priest dispensing a blessing.

E.—Can you give me any Scripture that sets forth the equality of the believers at the Lord's table?

B.—Yes. 1 Cor. x. 17. "We being many are one bread, one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." This verse is linked with one referring

to the Lord's Supper, and sets forth another truth, namely: that we are seen as the united particles of the same loaf.

E.—As you have referred to this passage in 1 Cor. x., may I ask you how we are to understand the words, "Is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" I mean how would you answer the Ritualist who claims the merit of obedience to the letter of the Word, and charges us with setting it aside?

B.—We know that when the Lord said, "This is my body," we are to understand the words as, "This sets forth my body," for this simple reason, among others, that he said so *before* His body was broken, or His blood shed.

Scripture tells us that He suffered once, and we know that was on the Cross. If these words were to be literally understood, then the Lord made Himself a second body, while the one He took for our sakes was perfect before them—and Himself broke this body before He was taken by wicked hands, crucified, and slain. Against such a foolish and hurtful misunderstanding the Lord guarded His disciples by instituting the supper while He was yet present with them.

But we have not far to seek for the cause of this being insisted on as a mysterious miracle, while the Lord's words, "I am the door," and "I am the vine," are not so interpreted.

E.—What is the cause you refer to?

B.—It is part of the creed of a system which ordains some to act as "priests" for their fellow men, and as

the New Testament recognises no such office any longer on earth, and no functions belonging to it, this ordinance has been seized on and perverted to clothe their "priests" with a power which is denied to the simple believer in the Lord Jesus. Supposing that a dozen plain Christian men were to meet, and the same words be used by one of their number in the breaking of bread as were used by the Lord Himself, those who hold "Transubstantiation," as it is called, would not for a moment allow that any change had taken place in the bread and in the wine.

Let me illustrate the subject farther in connection with the doctrine of *Baptismal Regeneration*. An earnest soul, we will say, asks the Anglican priest "What is the meaning of being 'born of water,' in John iii.?" The reply given is, that it takes place at "*the font*," when he sprinkles the babe. Away goes the enquirer deeply impressed with the wonderful power bestowed upon man. He diligently searches the Word to find what ordination is necessary to impart that power, and finding none, he burns with desire to bestow similar blessings on the many unbaptized babes in this city. Would not the "priest" who informed him by what process we are born of water and of the Spirit, be filled with dismay to find his disciple so occupied, and induce him to exchange his Bible for a catechism? In either case it is not the Word of the Lord but the dignity of the "Priest" that is sought to be established.

E.—I see what you mean very clearly, but I am not as clear as I should like to be as to the meaning of the words I called your attention to. "Is it not

the communion of the body of Christ?" What is it that we share in beyond the emblems that we take in our hands?

B.—A very weighty question which I would fain answer as simply as I can. We know the corn must have been *bruised* or we should not have had *bread*, and the grapes *crushed*, else we could not partake of the wine.

Now the worshippers are called upon by these emblems to remember that unless the Lord Jesus had been "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities," we could never have eaten of the bread of life. The *cost* of our redemption, the anguish He endured, in the measure it is realised by each is the measure of our communion of the body and blood of Christ.

E.—What connection is there between the twelfth of the 1st Corinthians and the Lord's Supper?

B.—It refers to the ministry that accompanied that service, and points out that all have a share in it.

E.—I do not see what you mean. Is there any verse that you consider the key of the chapter?

B.—Yes, and it is this: "*Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular*" (verse 27.) This deeply important passage conveys a truth that is often overlooked, namely; that the company of called-out-ones gathered by the Lord into a Church be they ten, a hundred, or a thousand, are arranged by Him for each other's welfare, and that of the entire number, *as truly* as the various parts of our body are

so arranged ; and our not *discerning* that such is the case does not alter the fact.

Now when the tongue speaks, all around bear witness to its work, but when the ear hears, none can detect it by looking at that organ, and yet it is doing its duty to the full as much as the tongue ; so the sister, to whom the service of the tongue is not given in public worship, by her patient hearing, and especially by her silent prayer for blessing on the word spoken, is according to the Lord's mind, as essential to His service as the other. If each member of the Church before coming to worship has been in communion with the Lord, and as they take their places all realise that they have as distinct a part and share in it, as my members have in my body ; they fulfil the conditions of the 12th chapter, and have only need to test themselves by the 13th, in order to be entrusted with the liberty and the privileges of the 14th chapter.

E.—How does the 13th chapter link itself with the one that precedes it?

B.—Still bear in mind the figure of the body and its various parts. What is it that nourishes alike the hair, the bones, and the flesh, is it not *the blood*? When *that* is healthy each of these different substances is maintained in the best condition for the general good. Now what healthy blood is to the body, so is charity, or rather *love*, to those whom the Lord has called out and joined together ; and this 13th chapter gives the assembly a number of Divine tests of being fit to worship before entering upon the subject of how to do so.

E.—But you do not consider that the 12th and 13th chapters are written only in connection with the Church when assembled together. Do they not express our relation to each other at all times and seasons ?

B.—Undoubtedly they do, and I thank you for the remark ; but what I earnestly seek to establish in your mind is, that the Lord has distinctly laid down our relationship to each other and to Himself, and puts us all in our proper places *before* He entrusts us with the liberty of ministry, which is the next point for us to consider. Therefore when liberty of ministry leads to confusion, discord, and unprofitableness, it is not just to reject the principle as not of God when there has been no attempt to maintain the conditions to which this privilege is granted.

E.—Where is the liberty of ministry set forth in the 14th chapter ?

B.—Here is one passage : “ For ye may all prophecy one by one, that all may learn and all may be comforted (v. 31).

E.—But there never would be time for that, however profitable the ministry might be.

B.—No. *Two* or *three* are mentioned in a preceding verse as a suitable number to exhort at any one meeting ; the rest are to hear and judge.

E.—Now the verse you have last referred to speaks distinctly of *prophets* to whom the Word of the Lord was sometimes revealed even as they were assembled together. How can you take directions that apply to

the ministry of such individuals as if they were applicable now ?

B.—I see we must come to an understanding about prophets and prophecy. What is prophecy ?

E.—The foretelling of things to come by one who has himself been told them by God, as Daniel and the Apostle John.

B.—Quite so. But the Scripture uses this word also to express other Divine teaching. The third verse of the chapter we are now considering tells us that “he that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification, to exhortation, and to comfort.”

In the 1st Book of Chronicles, chapter xxv., and 2nd verse, we read that the sons of Asaph “prophesied according to the order of the King,” by which we are to understand that David instructed them to use the knowledge that *they had*, NOT that he was capable of inspiring them.

In Rev. xix. 10, we read, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,” or in other words, he who declares concerning Christ what the Spirit has taught him is reckoned to prophecy in this sense of the word. Furthermore, we have evidence in this xiv. chapter of 1st Corinthians, that these prophecies were not to be received as the Word of the Lord without examination. “Let the other judge,” is the exhortation; not, Let them hear and obey. Some words have a higher and lower signification. The word everywhere translated *angel*, is used also to describe the *messengers* sent by John the Baptist, and these we know were men. The subject has been well defined by Thomas Newberry in the following words :

“Prophecy, in the present day, is a man in communion with God declaring the mind of God, but fallibly ; and therefore they should be subject one to another.” The last Scripture, Rev. xxii. 18, forbids anything being added which should become Scripture.

E.—Have we any other detail of the worship of the assembly besides the gift of tongues and prophecy ?

B.—We observe in the fifteenth verse that prayer and the singing of hymns formed part of the worship.

E.—And supposing that no one present was able to exhort, or expound the Word, would the worship have to be confined to these ?

B.—By no means. There is the Word of God itself that we may read, and so let the Master teach His disciples directly. In the 26th verse we read of a *psalm* forming part of the service. They had not the whole New Testament in their hands as we have, and the Spirit guided to that portion of the old where worship is the central idea.

E.—But I don't see how a meeting of Christians on this plan can be secure against all sorts of talking, and it is just this that makes me so nervous ; I never know what is going to happen next.

B.—We have no security whatever against an unprofitable meeting other than the faithfulness of our Lord to His promise of being in our midst.

E.—How do you mean ?

B.—If we come together as those who desire to be subject to the will of God, and order our meetings according to His Word, we know He is in our midst,

and He makes this manifest to all who are present by preventing the utterance of that which would be an occasion of stumbling.

E.—Would not a disturbed or unprofitable meeting prove that this way of worship was not of God?

B.—I will answer you by putting another question. Did the manna that stank prove, thereby, that it had not come down from heaven? (Ex. xvi. 20.)

E.—No; it only proved that it had been wrongly kept.

B.—Now just see how inconvenient an article of food manna must have been to the slothful or wayward Israelite. If he did not get up early he lost it, for it melted. If he would obtain some from a neighbour that too failed, for he that gathered much had nothing over. If he wanted to make one day's gathering do for two day's eating, he was disappointed again. Manna he *must* gather else he starved, and gather it also when and how God appointed it. Now *we* are exhorted "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together," and we have only this portion (1 Cor. xiv) that instructs us as to the manner of our coming together when we worship. We therefore dare not set aside our pattern, and if any disorder like a dead fly, makes the whole worship stink, it shows that there is something wrong in it, and should bring us on our knees in confession. (See Eccl. x. 1.)

If we have been careful about fulfilling the conditions laid down, the Lord will never suffer us to be put to confusion; and if we neglect these conditions, confusion is the best thing that could happen to us.

E.—But could we not to some extent secure ourselves against confusion by granting liberty of ministry to a certain number of qualified persons? My cousin, who goes to church, asked me if we had been edified by a cabman or porter one Sunday morning, and maintained that the door was open for such a thing to happen. Is it so?

B.—If the Lord gives one of our brethren in the humbler walks of life the ability to speak to profit should we refuse him liberty to do so? There are cases where this liberty is used by one who has neither the gift nor the knowledge for such service, and I will speak of the Scriptural way of dealing with such a case at a future time, but now I want you to observe how the “*open meeting*,” as it is called, is in perfect keeping with the present dispensation, when every believer is a priest.

In Acts viii. 4, we read, “They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.” What a host of labourers did the Lord at once send into the field! And it is in such a meeting as we have been considering that these labourers got their first lessons in testimony for the Lord. First; it may be there is only courage and ability to give out a hymn, then to read a suitable portion of the Word; afterwards, as the heart becomes enlarged, there is power and utterance given to engage in prayer, and so on for a few words of exhortation. And this progress is wonderfully quickened if, instead of coldly criticising, the silent worshippers bear him who takes part on their hearts in prayer. The Lord knows whether the lack of this is not far greater among us than it should be.

E.—Ought the whole of the service to be directly connected with the Lord's table? I mean have reference to the Saviour's work for us? this is, I hear, strongly held by some.

B.—It is the first thing before us. *Remembering* Him and looking forward to see Him again. It would not be well, as a rule, to put forward and dwell on any subject, before we have attended to the ordinance which we have gathered to celebrate, unless the consideration of it helps us to partake of it more worthily, by bringing us into more real communion with Himself. But having remembered our Lord in the breaking of bread, what is more suitable than to have our attention directed to Scripture that bears on other subjects, so that we may learn how to please Him more and more. What can be more in accordance with His will than the expounding of His Word? See Acts xx. 11.

E.—They say that there are other meetings when these subjects can be brought forward.

B.—What meetings? Are not nine out of ten so occupied during the week, that if the precious hours of the Lord's Day morning pass without a word of exhortation they virtually get none at all. The evening service is that of preaching the Gospel to the unsaved, and woe to the Church that neglects this. The rigid adherence to this practice in any meeting soon stamps it with *want of growth*. The reason is plain. If we would stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (Col. iv. 12), it is necessary that we receive the truth in the proportion in which God has

mixed it. The first and second half of Ephesians will serve as an illustration, and those who take upon themselves to sift out all exhortations that deal with the detail of daily walk from ministry at the Lord's table, and *fail to secure* to those, who can only then be present, the supply of such ministry, I think incur a responsibility of the gravest kind.

E.—Is it true that Brethren never study their subjects before hand, but depend upon the Spirit's teaching at the time?

B.—That is a misunderstanding of what the earlier Brethren taught which I can very soon remove. The *process* by which the Holy Spirit enables a believer to edify his brethren is no longer by a new revelation, as often was the case before the Testament was complete. If we are daily feeding on the Word, and constant in prayer for the understanding thereof, He teaches us to gather and group together truth that is found in different parts of the Word, and so to apply it that a distinct lesson is thereby taught. Frequently He brings to remembrance at the time of ministry an entirely different line of truth from that on which we proposed to speak. If such a man as H. W. Soltau (who wrote about the Tabernacle), said that he never prepared a subject for the Lord's day morning, it was because 1 Tim. iv. 15, was so true of him, that no hour of the day or night found him *unprepared*. When, however, a believer is so occupied with the profit and loss of this passing life, that prayer and reading are daily hurried through—what is the result of *his* "dependence on the Spirit" during the meeting? A hymn suggests to him a certain chapter, which he

reads and weakly paraphrases. Spite of much repetition, the subject draws soon to a conclusion, so he gives one or two random exhortations, and perhaps a page of his own experience. Every one present feels that there has been no preparation, and the food, so to speak, is liked none the better for not having been mixed or properly baked.

I would earnestly exhort my brethren in the ministry to spare no pains in preparing truth suitable to the need of the flock of God. Though the opportunity may not be given to open our lips, or spiritual instinct may lead us to suppress most, if not all, we intended to say, because it would not suitably follow the subject that has gone before—no part of such labour is lost. Our God Himself is the **THE GREAT PREPARER**. Every little mouth that comes into the world finds that **HE** has got ready some warm milk for its own especial benefit, and we are told in the original of Eph. v. 1., to be **IMITATORS** of God as dear children.

E.—Now there is a question on quite another part of our worship I am going to put. How is it that when our Lord gave His disciples a *form of prayer*, we, with all our professed subjection to the Word, do not repeat it?

B.—I think, with many, the way our Lord's prayer is constantly put into the mouth of unbelievers, and taught to those who have no business to use its solemn language, has made them recoil from repeating it; but that is no ground whatever, if it is clear the Master would have us continue to do so.

E.—Do you think otherwise—what are your reasons?

B.—There is a wondrous lesson contained in the Lord's prayer, inasmuch as we are taught how we may address God; and in what order our requests should flow. First *His* name and glory sought, afterwards the supply of *our* need. Yet if we come to examine the circumstances under which the prayer was taught, and compare them with our own, I think a difference will appear that perhaps has not yet occurred to you.

We find from Luke's gospel (chap. xi.), that it was in answer to their distinct request that the Lord put these words into their mouth; and whenever we find Him giving directions as to what was immediately to be carried out, He always did so subject to the law which He came to fulfil. Take as an instance "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore that they bid you observe, that observe and do." (Matt. xxiii. 3.) Paul taught not so. Why? Because Christ was then at the right hand of God—the priesthood was changed, and with it in his day there was a change also of the law; but before he suffered, Christ not only obeyed the law of Moses, but taught nothing that would set aside its rule.

Now the disciples who requested to be taught to pray, did so under very peculiar circumstances. The Son of God was their daily companion; the work by which He wrought out our redemption was not yet accomplished; His blood had not yet spoken peace; His all-prevailing name and merit was not given them to plead. They had access to the Father because they

loved the Son, though not aware as yet of the *cost* of that access. The Holy Spirit, whose office is to teach *us* to pray, had not yet been given. Those who made the request, were in daily dependence on their Father for the bread that perisheth, and the petition for the forgiveness of their sins on the ground of their own obedience was according to the law which still reigned. How perfectly the prayer answered all the needs of those to whom it was taught ; how its several petitions, enlarged by the Holy Spirit's subsequent teaching, *continue* to express our need, and will do so till prayer gives place to praise—I need not go into now, but leave the further consideration of the subject to your own heart before God. Far would we be from condemning a child of God for using the Lord's prayer if his soul echoed each of its requests, and if we err in judgment in understanding it *as a whole* to belong to a day that is passed, may the Lord reveal the error to us by His Word.

E.—I will only ask you, why you spoke of the disciples' daily dependence on God for food as if it were a peculiar circumstance. Is it not so with all of us ?

B.—It is. But how does it accord with the simplicity of the gospel, for a man to whom God has given—say a year's provision of the bread that perisheth—to say, "Give us this day our daily bread ?" Would it not, in such a case, be suitable for him to thank God for having so abundantly supplied his need ? I do not think there is any form of prayer that dishonours the Lord more than the thoughtless use of His own words.

E.—There is one other part of our worship that I want to speak to you about, and it is the singing. Is there not room for improvement here? Occasionally there is a break down in the tune, and the time is not kept at all. Now it appears to me that an instrument, if properly played, would prevent all this, and I confess I do not see why its help should be discarded, when there is the clearest Scripture evidence for the use of instrumental music in the House of God.

B.—Yes, when God dwelt in a visible house, had a visible high priest, a visible altar, a visible sacrifice, there were also instruments of service and instruments of music. In the New Testament, however, God is pleased to call His assembled children *His house*, and “dwells not in temples made with hands.” Nothing that the hand of man has made is mentioned in connection with the worship of this company. God is pleased with the songs of praise that rise from redeemed and loving hearts, and applies to it the choice expression, “*The fruit of your lips;*” but He places no instrument of music in the hands of those who bear the reproach of a rejected Christ. When He comes to reign, harps are seen in the hands of the saints—a fitting accompaniment to a manifested victory over his enemies. “Sing ye to the Lord, for *He hath triumphed gloriously.*”

E.—This may be after all only an inference of yours. Do you not think it is quite safe to conclude that, as instrumental music was once used with God’s sanction—and He has nowhere countermanded it—He is pleased with its continuance?

B.—No, I do not, and for this reason: God, our Father, is most particular in His directions to His children in all things concerning their worship of Himself: "See that thou make all things," He said to Moses, "according to the pattern showed thee on the Mount;" and in the last chapter of Exodus we are told seven times that he did so. You also remember that Moses was directed on one occasion to smite the rock, and water gushed from it. Here was a definite command simply obeyed. Years after he was told to *speak to the rock*, and, mark you! there was no caution added about not smiting it. Moses might have thought that as he *once* had been told to do so he might safely do it again, and if so, this thought cost him the most precious of all his earthly prospects. He did smite it, and he was not suffered to enter into the promised land.

E.—Then I suppose what is out of place in a company of believers is equally so in their own homes. You would be for banishing pianos, harmoniums, and every other instrument of music from our dwellings?

B.—By no means. God might refuse Cain's offering of fruit without in the least forbidding his own enjoyment of it. What we are now considering is not a moral principle, but whether the harmony of instruments, as well as the harmony of the lips, finds a place in what God has been pleased to set forth as acceptable worship from His assembled children.

E.—Well this xiv. of 1 Corinthians contains the precept, "Let all things be done decently and in

order," and as the instrument is not subject to the infirmity of beginning in a wrong key, and when properly played is most helpful in keeping the time, might not its use be pleaded for, to enable this precept the better to be carried out?

B.—If, I would rather say, our Father has been pleased to describe how He would have us praise Him, it becomes us diligently to qualify ourselves for so doing, and the use of an instrument to enable us to learn a tune is often as needful as an alphabet to teach us to read. The question is, "Shall those who have ear and voice neglect to qualify themselves for the sacrifice of praise, which we know *is acceptable*, or shall they bring into the worship of the assembly an instrument to make up for their shortcomings?"

E.—Yet I am conscious of a feeling of awe as I listen to the solemn peals of an organ that lifts me out of the scenes and cares of daily life, and makes me feel nearer heaven than I was before.

B.—I, too, have felt the thrill of such an enjoyment; but believe me, that elevating power which is given to the soul by enchanting music, a superb edifice, or a showy ritual, is only to be compared to the exhilarating effects of wine, diverting the thoughts for a time into a new channel, but leaving the soul more exhausted than before, for it has not been really in God's presence nor laid hold of His strength.

Let, however, the children of God, individually, earnestly seek to walk according to His will, and let their worship be simply ordered according to His Word, then the reward will be such a REAL PRESENCE

felt among them, that I would as soon expect a mother to neglect her babe, for the doll that had satisfied her childish heart, as for one who had enjoyed it, to return to any of the inventions of will-worship, be they *ancient* or *modern*.

The Family Service.

E.—I have thought a good deal on the subject of our last conversation ; and while I admit the principles of worship you set forth to be scriptural, and the manner of meeting according to the description of which we have a record in the Word, in great measure ; yet it seems to me one important element is wanting, and it is a *place for*, or a *recognition of*, any rule or authority in the Church of God. Surely this is taught likewise in the Epistles, and the need for it is as great now as it was then.

B.—Yes, we read of bishops and overseers (which is the same word differently translated), of elders, deacons, and more distinctly, “They that have the rule over you” (literally your guides), and “They that are over you in the Lord.”

E.—Then how should they be appointed ; what is their line of authority ; or do you class them with the miraculous gifts needful only till the canon of Scripture was complete ?

B.—You have given me enough to do to reply to your questions, but as the last is very easily disposed of by an emphatic *No*, it remains for me to deal

with the other two. Before describing what these rulers were, and the manner of their appointment, may I ask you to turn to and read Matt. xx. 25 to 28 ?

E.—"Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you : but whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister ; and whosoever will be chief among you let him be your servant : even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

B.—Now if you turn to the parallel passage in Mark x. 42, 45, the words "accounted to rule" are in the margin, "think good to rule," and this includes those who have the *desire* for power also. Whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant (or slave) OF ALL. The same doctrine is laid down by the Lord again at the close of His intercourse with His disciples (Luke xxii. 26), thus establishing it as His permanent will.

E.—What do you understand by *exercising authority* ?

B.—"Obey, because I tell you." A perfectly just principle in the king toward his subject, the captain to the soldier, the master to the slave, and indeed the father to the child. Such language and such principles are distinctly forbidden to those who rule, or desire to rule in the Church of God.

E.—What then is the nature of rule in the Church of God ?

B.—An illustration occurs to me in I. Tim. iii. 5. A bishop must be one who *rules well* his own house, as a proof that he is able to *take care* of the Church of God. This word “*take care*” is only to be found in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Look at that lovely picture ; the compassionate heart, the willing fingers, the loving forethought. He first gave his oil and wine for the sufferer, then his own beast to carry him, lastly, his own time in taking care for him ; nor does he leave without securing for him continued attention. The word for *ruling* in I Tim. iii. 5, is the one always found where rule in the Church of God is described.

E.—A very pleasant rule, certainly !

B.—And the Lord makes it one against which there is no rising up.

E.—But come now, there are cases where evil has to be put down as well as those where wounds have to be bound up. How does this rule answer then ?

B.—Perfectly. The word under consideration means to *stand in front*. Now do you know how a ram acts when he sees the fox’s eye upon the lambs ?

E.—No.

B.—Well, he gets the ewes and lambs together into a corner behind him, and presents his head and horns to the fox’s teeth ; nor does he relax his position till he knows the enemy is clear off ; and likewise, you may know a *ruler* of the right sort, as one who (whether the evil that threatens the flock be corruption within, or persecution without) bears the brunt of the

fight, not counting time, health, or life anything, if by his diligence he can deliver them.

E.—That reminds me of the text in Roman xii. He that ruleth with *diligence*. I often wondered why it did not say with *mercy*. It shows how different rule in the Church is from rule in the world.

B.—Yes, and you get the counterfeit rule in 1 Pet. v. 3. “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage,” *i.e.*, insisting on obedience, because we are placed in authority, and it is our due—instead of labouring to bring the conscience into obedience to the word of Christ. The Romanist evidently felt the edge of this word, for in the Douay version, *God’s heritage* is rendered *The Clergy!*

E.—How crafty! The bishops not to lord it over the clergy, but the bishops and clergy might lord it as far as they could over the people! What other qualifications beside ruling well his own house, tender care and vigilance, are needed in a ruler in the Church of God?

B.—He must be willing to be counted for nothing by those in whose welfare he is constantly occupied: able to bear coldness, ill temper, suspicion, angry words, sneering words, and no words at all where he looked for loving welcome. He must be able to endure all things from the saints, though unable to allow evil to work unhindered among them.

E.—But where is a ruler to be found who combines so much tenderness and vigilance with such humility?

B.—Such an one is not to be bought for money is he?

E.—No, of course not.

B.—Nor can he be made to fulfil these requirements in a training college?

E.—No. If your definition is a true one, it is not the man with a double measure, either of knowledge or utterance, that is wanted, but with a *double sized heart!*

B.—I am so glad you are brought to this conclusion, for I am able at this point of our conversation to state that as we want the real thing, and are not able to make it, we thankfully accept as much of these graces as the Lord distributes between two or three, if He is not pleased to bestow them all on any one individual.

E.—You admit, however, that in the early days, there were found individuals so richly endowed with grace as to be appointed permanently over certain churches, as for example Timothy and Titus.

B.—I gravely question if either of these men of God was *permanently* placed over the Churches of Ephesus or Crete in spite of the uninspired subscription at the end of the epistles, though it is plain that the Apostle gives to both, all the position he himself would have had in the same place.

E.—Were they not then bishops of those churches?

B.—In one sense certainly, but not, I think, in the way you mean. The Apostle Paul had taken each of these young men, at various times, as his constant companion, and spent the greatest pains in instructing them in the care of the churches of God, which we

know, were very numerous. So fully was his labour on them repaid, that he is able in sending the former to give him these credentials (1 Cor. iv. 17.) : "My beloved son, faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church;" and again (1 Cor. xvi. 10), "He worketh the work of the Lord *as* I also do." To the Philippians (chap. ii. 20), he says of Timothy, "I have no man likeminded (literally *of the same soul* as I), who will naturally care for your state."

Of *Titus* Paul writes (2 Cor. ii. 13):—That he could not continue at Troas for want of him : (vii. 14.) that he had fulfilled all that was promised concerning him : (viii. 16) that he had the same earnest care for the saints as himself ; (23) he calls Titus his partner and fellowhelper ; and (xii. 18) one who walked in the same spirit and in the same steps that he had done.

Now if we carefully examine the epistles to Timothy and Titus, we shall observe that the Apostle left them in Ephesus and Crete *for a time only*. (2 Tim. iv. 9.) Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me. (Titus iii. 12). Be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis. And instead of regarding Timothy and Titus as bishops of those two churches, they are to be considered as entrusted with apostolic power to *appoint* bishops according to his instructions.

E.—Where is your chapter and verse for that?

B.—I will give you Scripture presently, but at this point it would be well to state what a bishop is according to the New Testament, and what he is not. The first time the word is used, is in Acts xx. 28, and there only is it translated *overseers*,

which conveys a much more intelligible meaning than *bishop*. This word conceals the truth that the elders who were summoned in the 17th verse, are all addressed as bishops in the 28th. A most important fact is brought to light by this text, namely, that instead of there being but one bishop to a church, and his business that of looking after the clergy, there were many, and their occupation included the care of the humblest as well as the highest of the flock.

Now turn to Phil. i. Again we find *bishops* as well as *deacons* in the same assembly. Once more turn to 1 Pet. v. 1, 2, and we find the lesson in Acts xx. over again. The elders are addressed, and in the words "taking the oversight," they are told that they are bishops, for they are told to do *bishops work*.

E.—And yet is not the word *office* used, implying that bishops were installed by some kind of ordination?

B.—We do not question for a moment that the first bishops were ordained. Acts xiv. 23, tells us so plainly, and the instructions to both Timothy and Titus were to guide them in this matter; but if you turn to Acts xx. 28 again, you see Paul is able to tell them that the Holy Ghost has made them *bishops*. Now where the gift of "discerning of spirits" is bestowed on a Paul, a Timothy, or a Titus, so that they *know* the Holy Spirit directs their act and seals their choice, ordination is a blessed privilege; but how about the value of the ordination when there is no such heavenly warrant. Further, I would remark that there is neither thought nor word of "office"

connected with bishop or deacon. 1 Tim. iii. 1. is, "If any have a yearning for oversight," opening the door as wide as the church, but making such qualities of heart necessary, as would thin the number of candidates as God thinned Gideon's army.

E.—Now if a church had several bishops, do you mean to say that all were on the same level, and no one of them had more honour than the rest?

B.—On the contrary, the Word of God distinctly teaches that some *had* more honour than the rest, but the honour was not conferred by the choice of the one or the many. They that ruled well were to have *double* honour, especially if they likewise laboured in word and doctrine. We have seen what rule in the Church of God means, and so can understand how the double honour was conferred. The one who bore the heaviest burden, and stooped the lowest in ministering to the flock, would be given the first place by the Chief Shepherd, not as a life portion, however, but only so long as He fulfilled his ministry. Not a thought of "office" in any of the New Testament arrangements. When Paul says (Rom. xi. 13), "I magnify mine office," read "*service.*" In Rom xii. 4, "All members have not the same "*office,*" read, "*actions.*"

Though once a child of God, a child for ever; as *servants*, the privilege and position of our service is not reckoned when we cease to do it as unto Him.

E.—You have spoken a good deal about bishops, and acknowledged their value and importance in the Church of God. How is it that the term is never

applied by us to any that minister or rule in the Church?

B.—Because the Bible meaning of the Word is comparatively unknown, whereas the modern and general idea of a bishop is that of an ecclesiastic endued with peculiar and rare powers to which we make no claim whatever.

E.—What are they?

B.—He claims to be able, by placing his hands on the heads of those desiring “ordination,” to convey to them the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the same to all young people who can repeat the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostles’ Creed, and the Ten Commandments. He can, moreover, make a place of worship holy by consecrating it, and can impart the same mysterious benefit to any piece of ground set apart for the burial of the dead, by walking round it previously.

Regarding as blasphemous these notions connected with the title of *bishop* as it is *now* conferred upon men, we prefer the other word *elder*, to which no such powers are thought to belong ; or *pastor*, which exactly conveys under the meaning of *shepherd* what a bishop is according to the Word of God.

E.—Will you now explain the word *Deacon*? Is that too a title which means at the present day something quite different to the meaning it has in Scripture?

B.—It has changed its signification, though not nearly to such an extent as the former word. I may say its meaning has become much restricted among Nonconformists.

E.—How so ?

B.—Because the word “deacon,” which occurs but five times in the New Testament, is the same as is translated twenty times as *minister*, and five or six as *servant*. Moreover, the words *serve*, *service*, *to minister*, *ministry*, in one hundred cases are translations of another form of this very word. In Rom. xv. 8, Christ is given this title. In Col. i. 23, Paul takes it. In 1 Thess. iii. 2, he applies it to Timothy, and nothing can better illustrate how wide the scope of the service is, than the texts I refer you to.

E.—But in the opening verse of the epistle to the Philippians, both bishops and deacons are addressed, showing that their occupation must have been distinct.

B.—I think that where a distinction is drawn as in this case, the service of the deacons had reference to the bodily needs of the saints. There always have been those who, while ministering to the wants of the aged, the sick and the little ones, had not the gift of the tongue, wherewith to comfort and instruct them ; and these are told I think in 1 Tim. iii. 13, that their faithfulness in the one service shall be rewarded by the gift of the other.

E.—What is the restricted sense of the word Deacon you spoke of as it is now used ?

B.—That of receiving the monetary gifts of the Church and distributing them. The sixth chapter of Acts points to the origin of this service, though the word deacon does not occur in the chapter. The Church was directed to choose godly men for this service, and we see in the following chapter how soon

God took two of these, on whom their choice fell, for the additional work of publicly proclaiming the Gospel.

E.—Is there no other distinct service alluded to in the Word but those we have been considering?

B.—Yes, there are *evangelists*, whose especial mission it is to proclaim the Gospel to the unsaved; and *teachers*, in whom not only a special knowledge of the Scriptures exists, but a power to expound their meaning. I remember one of these who had the infirmity of deafness, speaking of his own share in the Lord's work, thus, "If the Master had made me an *evangelist* He would not have given me such a feeble voice, and if he had appointed me to a *pastor's* work, he would not have taken away my hearing."

E.—Well, in all these services I do not see that any share exists for the *women*, except in the singing. They have no part in what you were describing as the "Family Worship."

B.—Yes, in the breaking of bread they are partakers; and who can tell what we owe to their silent fellowship in prayer? Now we shall see from the comparison of a few passages how the Lord links the women with the men in the very services we have been considering. Phil. iv. 3, "Help these women for they laboured with me in the Gospel."* Were these not evangelists, though occupying no platform? Rom. xvi. 6, "Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us." Was she not engaged in pastoral work? Acts xviii. 26, "They

* See Revised Version, which brings out the interesting fact that Euodias and Syntyche are referred to.

(a man and his wife) expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." Priscilla, of whom we get honourable mention elsewhere, is here seen as a teacher. Once more, Rom. xvi. 1, Phœbe, who carried the epistle, is styled a *deaconess*, though it is translated *servant*.

E.—While I think of it, there is an expression used in 1 Cor. xii., where variously gifted men are described (towards the end of the chapter), and among these the word *governments*. What are we to understand by this? Is it a council of elders?

B.—No. It is a word signifying *steering, piloting*, and points to *guidance* rather than *authority*. There are times of great perplexity, both in matters of walk and doctrine, that come upon the assemblies of God in this world where special wisdom is needed to grasp all the facts of the case, and where a wrong decision might bring disaster. The Lord is pleased to give this wisdom to one or more individuals, and thereby deliver His people, who recognize in the counsel given what is the mind of the Lord. It seems to me that this word has a special meaning, coming, as it does, after another which takes in the feeblest member of the body of Christ.

E.—What word is that?

B.—*Helps*. A precious word. The idea in the original is that of one who takes up the other end of a burden that someone has begun to lift. How many of us there are who have no power to *commence* a service, but can readily give a helping hand to another that has the needed grace. Every sister who cannot

see her calling in any other line of service may do so here. Between the "helps" and the "governments," there is prepared a place for every redeemed soul of service to the Lord, if only such wait upon Him to make that service plain.

E.—Are not those who distribute the gifts of the Church to the needy poor, and known among us as "deacons" appointed by the Church?

B.—Yes, and these brethren are also charged with the care of the buildings where we assemble together from time to time, and transact business on behalf of the Church in regard to this and other property.

E.—Now, it was on my mind to ask, why could not the Church just as well choose some who have been proved to be godly men, and appoint them as pastors? Would it not give them a better footing in the assembly?

B.—Because we have no such authority granted to the Church in the Word of God. The Church is told to choose its own men for the distribution of its own gifts, and management of its visible property, and the Lord reserves to Himself the right of appointing the men whom He has gifted, to their several places in the Church.

E.—But how are we to know whom to *esteem highly*, and whom *to obey*, as the Thessalonians and Hebrews are exhorted to do?

B.—In the first place, it is important to see that those who "*addict*" themselves, or ordain themselves (as the same word is translated in Acts xiii. 48, and

Rom. xiii. 1) to the ministry of the saints, are to be submitted to. See 1 Cor. xvi. 15. The ground of their being *highly esteemed* is not that they are the choice of the Church, but for *their works' sake*. Why are those mentioned in Hebrews xiii. 7, to be *remembered*? Because they have spoken to us the Word of God. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, being written on their lives. Why are they to be *obeyed*? Because they watch for our soul's welfare. Now, the measure in which all these things are manifest to our consciences, is to be the measure of our submission. But further, I am prepared to show you how the choice of one or more pastors by a Church is attended with evil consequences.

1st: The appointment of certain godly men to the position of pastors, makes all others whom the Lord may give to that Church *intruders*.

2ndly: The *lack* of some qualifications in these godly men, is, therefore, a permanent injury to the assembly.

3rdly: The *continuance* of grace in these godly men is what the Church who appointed them has no power to maintain, while their subsequent degeneracy, (if it should occur) into coldness and worldliness might seldom be of a nature to deprive them of their appointment, yet their *condition* would deprive the flock of the care they need.

Lastly: If I appoint a servant to his work, I am responsible to maintain him unless he decline to receive wages for his service. Now we have seen that the edifying of the body is not by means of one or two, but by means of many. Are those who claim the privilege of appointing, aware of this, and prepared to take up its responsibilities?

E.—But could not some arrangement be come to between those who give themselves to the care of the saints, and such members of the Church as acknowledged their ministry, so that they might be free from anxiety and family cares?

B.—It would be a sad day for these ministers if such an arrangement on their behalf were made. For their eyes, instead of being constantly up to Him in whom all fulness dwells, would be cast over their shoulders to see whether their supporters were present in the assembly, and approved of what they said.

E.—What example have we in the Word as to the relation between pastors and flock in regard to the support of the former?

B.—The example of the Apostle Paul. As we have seen the instructions concerning the worship of the assembly, in that portion of the epistle to the Corinthians we talked about last time—and there only—so as to the relation between the Church and her pastors, we find it explained in the case of the Apostle Paul, and nowhere else.

E.—What relation did he stand in to a settled Church, while ministering among them?

B.—The record of himself in Acts xx. 34, also in 1 Thess. ii. 6, shows that he no more *depended* on them for support, than he did on the heathen, to whom he took the gospel.

E.—Do you mean that he would receive nothing from them?

B.—No, but it is clear that he often got nothing

from them. The Epistles to the Corinthians prove that that wealthy and highly gifted Church were content to be taught by Paul, and made use of his services while they left him to provide for his own necessities, or be ministered to by other Churches. (See Phil. iv. 16.)

E.—Yet Paul says in 1 Cor. ix. 14, “So hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”

B.—Quite so. But the principle he lays down in the succeeding verses is, that it were better to die than enforce his claim. “Freely ye have received, freely give” is still to be the watchword of those who having been justified *freely*, enter into the service of Him who has made them *free*, and the principle of directly depending on the living God for the supply of their temporal need, as truly as they do on His Word for the salvation of their souls, is what the apostle teaches so distinctly, that we accept it as the only course that is well pleasing to our Lord and Master.

E.—Well, to be sure! Not only should those who appoint themselves to the ministry be full of tenderness and forbearance, as well as vigilance, but they must be prepared to labour without any acknowledgment on the part of those for whom their strength is spent. I should think it must be hard indeed, to find those who are willing to work under such conditions.

B.—On the other hand, those who have a ministry to give, and have been taught by the Word exactly *how* the Master would have them use it, *how* precious

they are in His sight who do so use it ; and *what* He has in store at His right hand for those who patiently fulfil it, find sufficient encouragement to enter upon it—and more than sufficient.

E.—But that does not release those who are ministered unto from caring for those who labour among them. I suppose there are some who feel it a *privilege*, and others who would do so from a sense of *duty*, but there are, I am told, a large number who do nothing for those who care for their souls ; and it is pointed out as a great defect that no one can touch them.

B.—Oh, yes, He can do it who has said, “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.” There are certain forms of evil, and these touching the honour of of the Lord, that His people are called upon to judge and deal with, and there are others which affect their own position and honour that the Lord reserves to Himself the right to judge and to deal with. I will enter upon this subject more fully when I come to talk of “The Family Duties.” Just now we are occupied with our service, its character, its source, and the conditions under which we are called to fulfil it ; and here I would ask you if you have noticed a remarkable difference in the Old and New Testaments as to the *manner* in which the Master appoints His servants to His work ?

E.—No, except that it is as messengers of mercy they are sent, not (as before was often the case) executors of judgment.

B.—That is not the difference I have in my mind.

The contrast lies between the *single* testimonies of the Old Testament and the *double* testimonies of the New.

E.—I do not understand you.

B.—Wherever God deals with man in the Old Testament He uses single individuals to convey His message or execute His judgment. From Enoch to Malachi where do we find Him acting otherwise? Where angels are sent it is the same thing. One angel is sent to arrest Hagar's footsteps, and one angel suffices to destroy one hundred and four score and five thousand of Sennacherib's army.

It is true Moses had Aaron, but it was at his own urgent pleading, not as God intended he should go into Pharaoh's presence. It is true *two* angels went into Sodom when the place was to be destroyed, may not the occasion of it have been that there were four in the doomed city who clung to it so strongly that each required not a voice only but a *hand* to drag them forth? These exceptions confirm the rule which is established in all God's dealings with man till Christ came.

E.—And what new rule did He institute?

B.—That His witnesses should go forth two and two, and this order is preserved throughout the Gospel. Thus were the twelve sent on their missionary tour (Mark vi. 7); thus were the seventy appointed when these had returned (Luke x. 1). Thus did the Lord toward the close of His ministry. When the ass was to be brought *two* were sent to bring it (Matt. xxi. 1), and when the last supper

was prepared two were sent to lay it (Mark xiv. 13). When the glorious fact of His resurrection was to be declared to the sorrowing seekers of His body, the Master gave *two* angels the testimony (Luke xxiv. 4); and when a cloud hid His ascending form as the Lord Jesus was carried up into heaven, again we find *two* sent to assure those whose eyes were strained upwards, that He would surely return in like manner as He had disappeared (Acts i. 10).

E.—What do you think was the reason of this ?

B.—We may get some light upon that presently, but it is of untold importance to grasp the fact *that this was the Master's will* ; and when He ascended up on high the Holy Spirit continued to act upon the same principle. “ Separate me, Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them,” is the command in Acts xiii. 2. Did these men of God divide the land between them, like Ahab and Obadiah, when they searched for pasture for their cattle ? No, they went *together* and witnessed *together* ; and when an unhappy difference of judgment, concerning Mark, separated Paul from Barnabas, did Paul rejoice in his “ freedom,” as we hear many an evangelist and other labourer in the gospel doing, when parted from his fellows ? Nay, but immediately linked himself with Silas. He would do the Lord's work in the Lord's way.

E.—But are you not going too far : one person only can preach at a time, what is the other to do ? Or, come to my work as a Sunday School teacher ; I can instruct my own class without any assistance. What do I want a fellow labourer for ? and it would be

hardly possible to find one who is in harmony with you on all points of doctrine, and methods of teaching.

B.—And is it because the path is difficult and untried that you would reject it, though you know it is the Master's blessed will? It is just what we should expect that both the *worship* and the *service* of His appointing is what the flesh would dislike. There were two brothers who secretly came to the Lord to secure the best places for themselves in His coming kingdom. These two were linked naturally—not yoked together in service by Him. James and John did not obtain their request, but the Lord separated them, taking one to be with Himself, and finding for the other a new yoke-fellow. While James yet lived (Luke xxii. 8) Peter was linked with John in the preparation of the passover, and we find them side by side in those wondrous Pentecostal days, described in the earlier chapters of Acts. I mention this to show that it is not one who *naturally harmonizes* with us that we are to expect, but rather to wait upon the Lord for one whom He would choose us to work with. And, furthermore, if we do thus wait, the blessing both to ourselves and others will be beyond comparison greater than before.

E.—Are natural relationships to be avoided in working for the Lord?

B.—Not if brothers and sisters unite in desiring to serve Him. The double testimony of husband and wife working together is greatly owned of God.

E.—But in what manner should two be linked in service, when the service is of a nature that one only can perform at a time?

B.—Have you ever known any one skilled in what is called “WINDOW GARDENING.” A dozen or twenty pots of flowers and ferns include the whole of her treasures. It matters little that a brother or neighbour speaks slightly of the labour she spends, and the fuss she makes over her plants. Lifting the frond, or looking into the opening blossom, she finds in their beauty her reward.

Now when two enthusiasts in this occupation meet, what do they talk about? Mr. Gladstone’s policy is a matter of absolute indifference to both; but whether a new plant that has put out two buds is going to bloom this season, and what the colour of the flower will be, is a matter of absorbing interest and great speculation. It may be that contention arises as to the amount of water, sunshine and shade their plants need. They may differ entirely as to what the temperature of the room should be, and how insects that prey on the leaves can best be destroyed; but they agree in thinking that nothing comes up to “*window gardening*,” and finally they ratify peace by an exchange of pots.

Now, do you not see that while the responsibility and service of these two girls is distinct—how greatly they become each other’s helpers by an occasional conference? So with yourself in your class at the Sunday School. If your thought is not wholly set upon how you may best put forth the lesson, but your attention is frequently given to *the eyes* of the children, to see whether or not they are taking it in, you will find the interest in your work grow with your labour, as with the florists we have just been talking about.

Then how helpful to converse with a fellow-teacher

on the way home, on the progress made; how it strengthens for future service when it leads to fellowship in prayer; and if it so happen that a child gets on better with one than with another, an exchange of pupils is not at all a bad idea.

The heart, I know, sometimes gets weary with finding little response from what it feels a great effort; and I cannot but prescribe for such our brother James Wright's cordial—A faithful messenger refresheth the soul of his Master. In these cases also there is more comfort to the downcast teacher who has one whom he or she can pray with, than for the solitary toiler. Even differing judgments, when skilfully dealt with, become often our greatest blessings.

E.—What skilful dealing do you refer to?

B.—That of bringing all these differing plans and differing opinions together before the Lord in prayer, and seeking by His grace not to act till He has made the yoke-fellows of one mind and of one judgment. The first lessons in “loving the brotherhood,” and “being all of one mind,” are learnt in the school of subjection one to another.

E.—I remember that Peter only was sent to Cornelius, and that Paul was on Mars Hill alone, so also John at Patmos, so I do not think that united service is such a *rule* as you do.

B.—When Peter went he was accompanied by certain brethren; whenever we find Paul alone we find him longing for fellowship. Silas and Timothy were commanded to join him, “with all speed,” when he went to Athens, and the solitude of John in Patmos, if such was the case, added, we may be

sure, to his trial. I fully admit that a child of God is not only called at times to *stand* alone, but to *walk* alone, just as we may have to preach alone and visit alone. Yet if where fellowship can be obtained solitude is preferred, the soul is not enlightened on this part of the Master's will.

E.—Is there any Scripture which gives a reason for the double testimony you have been speaking of?

B.—Yes. “In the mouth of *two* or three witnesses shall every word be established.” (2 Cor. xiii. 1.)

What wonder is it when two missionaries are sent out to a country, and they divide the land between them, living at a distance from each other, that their *word* is *not* established. Their own souls get out of health for lack of those graces, only to be maintained by fellowship, and their word often becomes powerless.

E.—Is there any reward attached to obedience in this matter?

B.—Yes, and a precious one it is. “If *two* of you shall agree as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.” That word *agree* is actually “symphony,” implying that the agreement is the result of fellow-workers being brought to desire the same thing, not the accidental agreement of two who may chance to meet, and the “thing” is a most practical word taking in every detail of the business of daily life as well as spiritual interests. This verse, so well known to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, is the especial property, I may say, of those who are walking in obedience to Him, and who shall limit its blessing?

The Family Duties.

E.—In the course of our last conversation you promised to explain the responsibilities of membership when we came to talk about “*Family Duties.*” Are you free to enter on the subject now?

B.—Yes; and in order to do so, we must first of all be established in the fact that we *are* members of one family.

E.—You mean related to all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus?

B.—That is a leading doctrine of our faith, but it is also true that the Lord associates some of us together, and thus practically chooses those brethren and sisters for us, with whom it is His will that we should be joined in Church relationship.

E.—Where is your Scripture for putting the matter thus?

B.—The twelfth of 1st Corinthians. “Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular.” The assembly, accustomed to meet round the Table of the Lord at Corinth, are described as a miniature in their Church relationship of that which *all saints* shall be

manifested to be at His coming. Turn also to Eph. ii. 22. Here we find the saints at Ephesus described as *an habitation of God*, a miniature again of *all the building* which is spoken of in the preceding verse. Now what I want you to lay hold of is, that there is a Divine will at work in grouping believers together as a Church, and though their number increases and diminishes, and changes constantly take place among them, they are still regarded as a whole. *The body of Christ*, full of members necessary to each other, and to Him—*an habitation of God* built of so many living stones.

E.—So it conveys a wrong idea to speak of ourselves as a *fragment* or *section* of the Church of Christ. Does it?

B.—Yes, because a fragment or a section of a living thing is nothing without the whole. The whole company of the redeemed might be compared to a *forest*, the various Churches resembling individual trees, each complete in itself, having its own complement of branches and leaves; yet do they all draw their life from the same source, and expand under the same sunshine.

E.—But where this simile fails to my mind is just this. The branches and leaves of a tree must always belong to the tree that produced them, but a child of God may be a member of one Church to-day, and another to-morrow; and there are not a few whom I know, who decline to be united with any Church of Christ, but claim the liberty of membership with several at once.

B.—No spiritual truth can be exactly set forth by any earthly simile, and I fully admit the difference you have pointed out. I do not forget for one moment, that being redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, makes me as truly related to the brother or sister whose name I have never heard, as to the one I constantly meet at the Lord's table. I would also remind myself that those I meet there for the first time, are to be taken to my heart for the Lord's sake, as truly as those whose fellowship I have long enjoyed; but the question we have now to settle is one that is brought up in the latter part of your remark.

E.—You mean about not joining any Church on the plea of belonging to them all?

B.—Just so. Now let us avoid the dangerous principle of allowing a practice, "*because there is no Scripture against it*"—and as obedient children draw our conclusions from the expressed mind of Christ.

First of all, we find when the Lord sent out His twelve disciples to teach and to preach, they were especially instructed to *abide in the house* that first gave them welcome. (Luke ix. 4.) Also when seventy more were commissioned, this direction was repeated in the emphatic words, "*Go not from house to house.*" The context shows that they were not limited to the four walls, as far as testimony was concerned. They might teach publicly, and from house to house as Paul did (Acts xx. 20), but the Chief Shepherd went before them and prepared the heart of whom He would to receive them, and His word to each servant was, "*There abide till ye depart from that place.*"—In other

words, always return there when the day's work is done. Let those who would inquire more of *Me*, know where they can be sure of finding *you*.

Do let me beg of you to let this injunction have its full weight on your conscience; how clear the principle that when not actually gone forth on the Master's service, He would have us found in the house of His own choosing.

E.—Allowing your argument, does it not point to the domestic habits of the Christian rather than to his Church relationship?

B.—You see there were no Churches in the sense we are now considering, when our Lord gave charge to His apostles, but it is very instructive to see how Peter and John in Pentecostal days, when they could have claimed a right to belong to every gathering of saints in Jerusalem, are yet spoken of as going to "THEIR OWN COMPANY" when discharged by the council. (Acts iv. 23.)

Now turn to I Cor. xii. 18, where the miniature body, if I may so say, that united for breaking of bread is described, and what do we read, "*Now hath God set the members, every one of them, in the body as it hath pleased Him.*"

1st. It is God who puts us in our place.

2nd. He puts every one in the right place.

3rd. We should not leave our place unless He clearly shows us that such is *His pleasure*.

E.—You surely do not limit our fellowship to those with whom we are accustomed to break bread?

B.—By no means. Take in all the saints you can,

but do not overlook those whom *He has given you to love* for His sake, and selecting one here and another there who are "so nice" and "so dear," call that *largeness of heart*.

E.—Why do you think my meeting with certain of the Lord's children at His table gives them a prior claim on my affections?

B.—Because it was to those whom the Lord gathered round His first supper He gave the new commandment that they should love one another as He had loved them. If the Lord leads me into fellowship with a company of His children, I ought to hear Him saying this over again to me, as I take my place with them.

E.—But a great many do not see this, who are in fellowship with us.

B.—Alas! it is even so, and is the secret of loss of joy in the Lord and united testimony for Him. The Lord's Supper is to many a kind of spiritual refreshment-room, where each comes and goes without a thought or a care for the welfare of those who are seated at the same feast.

E.—What is the reason of this?

B.—Because their place at His table is regarded as *a matter of their own choice*, instead of being His appointment for them. He who has told us to love one another with a pure heart fervently, knows the feebleness of our capacity in this respect, and brings before us those to whom it is His will our love shall be shown. "*The brother whom he hath seen*" (1 John iv 20), is to be the test of his obedience.

E.—But those whom we see at the Lord's table include very many more than we can know personally, however much we might be desirous of fulfilling the precept.

B.—The Lord knows that such is the case. What we have to see to is, that we are ready to serve any of these for His sake, and daily to seek from Him the opportunities for doing so.

E.—I wish I knew where to begin.

B.—The place for us to begin is on our knees. Having laid yourself at the Lord's feet for service in the family of which He has made you a member, be constantly looking for His leading.

E.—But I am not one of those who put themselves forward.

B.—Ah! dear friend, we little know how much selfishness mingles with our humility. Some who visit us from other gatherings are quite shocked to see a brother, after announcing his purpose, walk up to the desk and speak from it on a Lord's Day morning. Their idea of *humility* on that occasion is, that the speaker should stand just where he happened to sit, and some hold that turning the face toward the wall in prayer bespeaks a lowly mind. Now whatever reason our dear friends may give for such a practice, in Bristol we should consider the act one of *thoughtlessness* or *pride*.

E.—How do you make that out?

B.—Because there are in every company some who hear but imperfectly, and the front seats are

gladly offered to such, to give them every advantage, and that they may further help themselves by watching the lips of the speakers.

Now what should you think of a shepherd who would not carry turnips across a field to some lame sheep, because he did not consider them worth feeding?

E.—That he was not fit for his work, but why don't you come to the point at once?

B.—I am coming to the point. Do you not agree with me that prayer and exhortation in a meeting is not for the relief of the feelings of the speaker, but for the edification of the hearers. Does not 1 Cor. xiv. 19, settle the point?

E.—Yes, very clearly.

B.—Then what right have I to make my part in the service a *blank* to some, because I do not care to go where they can have fellowship with me? If I forget them am I not *thoughtless*, and if I am very much afraid of being thought forward, but not at all afraid of doing my work badly, am I not *proud*?

The subject is one of such importance that I cannot refrain from asking the help of dear R. C. Chapman, of Barnstaple. Some ten years ago, when we began our district Bible readings, Bergin and I agreed to ask our esteemed brother, as he was passing through Bristol, "to take the chair" (as our dissenting friends say) on the occasion. The daughter of the aged member in whose house the first meeting was held was nervous, full of "complaints," and very hard of hearing. Of course R. C. C. gave her the place of

honour at his right hand. Our subject was 1 Cor. xii. By-and-by we came to the verse, "Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary."

"For instance," said he, stretching out his hand, as he is wont to do, towards the company seated round the table, "the service to this company of believers, rendered by our dear sister here, lies in her *being deaf*, so that what is spoken must be uttered so distinctly that all are constrained to hear!"

The entirely new light that this remark sheds on an old text is what I commend to your thoughtful attention.

There is also a form of *humility* prevalent among us for which I feel little respect. It is the patient endurance of crying evils solely because they happen to be ancient things.

I will cite as an instance the painful seats in our old Bethesda, on which no child can maintain itself in any position without the aid of its hand or foot, and whereon the inexperienced stranger vainly thinks to rest during the service.

Surely it is more *humble* to consider the shape of the body which God has made, and so to support it that the spirit may be unhindered during the precious hour of worship, than to force the body into a position where it becomes a constant interruption?

Our long submission to the carpenters who lived in the early part of the century has been rewarded by hundreds of strangers who ventured in *once* to hear the Gospel, declining to come a second time.

E.—But, to return to the subject of our ministry

to one another as fellow members of one body, suppose I am refused by those I seek to serve?

B.—Do you see an aged sister nervously looking at a crowded crossing, say, that is my mother, and give her your stronger arm to lean on. Do you meet another who has lost her way, say, that is my sister, and, if able to do so, conduct her to her destination. Do you overtake her child going to school in the rain, say, that is my child, and put your umbrella over her. I do not think in these cases you will find your service refused. Just as a little key that you can hide in your hand often gives access to a large house, so the evidence of your love for the Master's sake will gain an entrance to the heart, and make the way easy for future communion.

E.—Have we any scripture for our assembly or Church meeting at the same time in three, and even four, places as we do?

B.—No, I cannot say that such an arrangement is scriptural, and it is by no means to be commended for many reasons.

E.—I am sure it adds greatly to the difficulty of our knowing one another, because there are such constant changes in the company that sit down together, and we never think of enquiring if a missing friend is ill or gone away, because it may be only that they are at one of the other places.

B.—It also adds greatly to the labour of oversight, and makes it very difficult for the brethren who take round the bread and wine, to know whether those who partake of it have been duly received, or are strangers acting on their own impulses.

E.—Then why does this state of things continue to exist?

B.—Partly because the principle has existed for nearly forty years, and a large number of esteemed brethren and sisters have no objection whatever to its continuance; but principally I judge because the separation of the Church into three distinct assemblies would involve great practical difficulty.

E.—Why could it not be effected by asking the members which place they would prefer to attend?

B.—Two of our places are free of rent, but share in defraying that of the third. Would it be fair to divide, so as to leave all *that* burden on the company least able to meet it? Again, one of our places is in a locality where scarcely any poor reside, or are able to attend. In what way should the share of help that they *now* contribute to the poor be supplied, if the members who meet in this place formed a separate assembly? And yet if this could be done without any sacrifice of brotherly love, there is no change for which I should be more truly thankful.

E.—For what especial reason?

B.—Because with a constantly shifting scene before our eyes it is felt to be *beyond our power* to remember with loving regard those around us, and thus the precepts which form so large a part of what the Lord would have us yield obedience to, become like dead letters.

It is also greatly against the progress of Gospel preaching in the evening, for instead of being able to count upon the presence and support of those gathered

round the Lords' table in the morning, the preacher must be prepared to find many of their seats empty, a proof of the little interest felt by many of them, in the house becoming filled. Lastly, there is the serious drawback of the time and strength of the brethren, who meet once a week to consider matters relative to the condition of the Church, being overtaxed by the requirements of the three assemblies.

And yet, in spite of all these disadvantages, there may have been a use in this branched tree—if I may so call it—which would not have been served by one of a single stem; and as we have had no hand in these arrangements any more than in making the times wherein we live, let the greater difficulties in the way of promoting and maintaining fellowship urge us to more continued prayer and effort for the grace we need.

There are many who *are* constant in their attendance at the same place, quite enough to form a large circle of fellowship; and I make bold to say that we do not enjoy a tithe of the blessing that these might be to us, and are great spiritual losers thereby.

E.—I wish you would explain yourself by illustrating your meaning in a practical way.

B.—Take for instance those occasions in our lives where natural sympathies are called forth towards us. What favourable opportunities do they present to us for being knit together in love, if rightly turned to account!

A child is born to believers in fellowship with us. The parents in subjection to the Word refrain from having it "christened," as the world says, at the

parish font: sponsors and such devices of tradition, they wholly repudiate, and they do well; but how do some celebrate the event? Just have the birth registered as the law directs, and perhaps send a notice to the prayer meeting desiring thanks to be returned for the mother's safety. Is this as it should be? Is the advent of another soul into a household not an occasion for special prayer for blessing upon it, and for wisdom in training it? Is not the desire of both parents that it should be the Lord's? Certainly. How then should the blessing be sought? Is it not by calling together some of those whom He has given us to be brothers and sisters, and unitedly dedicating the young life to Him? The child is the gainer by those many petitions, though unconscious; the parent's hearts are refreshed and drawn out towards those who have responded to their appeal, and the guests are likewise blessed; for the very fact of their being asked to be present for such a purpose reminds them of their heavenly calling, and strengthens the links of love that bind them to their hosts.

E.—Yes, I see. Do you mean that the parents should entertain all whom they invite to tea or supper?

B.—Not at all. Refreshment can be offered where the circumstances admit, but united prayer on behalf of the new life given, is that which it is the parent's privilege to crave, one of the rights of their Church membership.

And now a few words about the marriage tie. We will suppose a case where both are believers in fellowship. They seek not to be conformed to the world.

Display in dress, equipages, toasts, etc., they both eschew, and they do well. What course do they prefer in not a few cases. The wedding-day is carefully kept secret. A few relatives and privileged friends meet the person who is to unite them in marriage in the registrar's presence; some idlers, passing by, enter the chapel, seeing the door open; and after a few minutes the bride and bridegroom take their departure, the whole business being done. Is this a marriage according to the mind of Christ? Is it an affair to be transacted, as if the parties were ashamed of what they are doing?

E.—I suppose you would be for public notice being given the preceding Sunday at all our meetings, so that the Church should feel itself invited to attend?

B.—I should not think such a course seemly or suitable; but as in the previous case this event also furnishes an opportunity for *strengthening or weakening* our Church relationship, I would ask the future husband and wife, Are there not those by whose ministry you have been helped, by whose prayers you have been comforted, by whose conversation you have been edified?

Have you not those who would gladly write to them in your name, mentioning the intended day and hour, asking their presence on the occasion, at least to ask their *Amen* to the prayers offered for the Lord's blessing? A circle of ten, twenty, or thirty, such who have responded to your appeal to come and rejoice with you, is worth a table loaded with bridal gifts; and the prayer of that half-hour will be an earnest

of many more to follow, which will be fulfilled in your joy.

E.—But if friends are asked to be present at a wedding they expect, no doubt, that it includes an invitation to the house.

B.—It only needs, that the *object* of the invitation, the *hour*, and the *place* be plainly stated, and no misunderstanding is likely to occur.

E.—Still, there are often relatives who have a great deal to do with the arrangements, who would object in many cases to what you propose.

B.—Very true, and I don't think there is any event in our lives wherein we distinctly seek to honour the Lord, but that Satan *will* stand in the way to hinder if he can. There is such a dread of what the world will say, if we do not conform to its customs. Especially is this the case in the matter of *funerals*. Plumes, hat bands, truncheons, and such like senseless trappings, are permitted as showing "respect for the deceased," instead of being protested against as unbecoming the simplicity of a child of God. And as you say these things are often out of the control of the mourners, and then it is not for us to judge *them*, but simply to keep before ourselves what is befitting *our* pilgrim calling. It does not occur to many that for the hire of *one* mourning coach *three* cabs might be obtained, and thus from various parts of the city could be brought members of our large family, both to share in the sorrow of the hour, and to reassure the hearts of the mourning ones, by exceeding great and precious promises, as they lower the body into its sleeping chamber.

E.— Well, it seems to me that we have been considering the *privileges* of membership rather than its *duties*. We have not yet touched upon what it becomes *us to give* for the Lord's sake, and what direction these gifts should take. In the early days believers had all things in common. On the principle of being guided by the rules the apostle then laid down, does this apply to ourselves under any circumstances?

B.—The Spirit of God has not signified in any of the epistles written to Gentile Churches that they should thus dispose of their property. In all matters of giving, each individual is exhorted as a steward in the disposal of what God has entrusted him with.

E.—But ought not the assembly to see that each member contributes his or her share towards the rent and expenses of the chapels, the relief of the poor, and the support of those who labour in the gospel?

B.—We have no Scripture authorising us to ask any members what they have, or what they do with it. We have only to declare the mind of God on these matters, and let the Spirit of God apply it. “Freely ye have received, freely give,” was the motto given by the Lord Himself, to the first missionaries He sent forth. “*Freely ye have received, freely give*” was engraven on Paul's heart, and ought to be upon ours.

E.—But it seems like a defect in Church order if no steps can be taken to deal with the selfish and indifferent. I heard of one who was contrasting the enjoyment of being *let alone* among ourselves, with the constant appeal made upon her slender purse in

the denomination she had left. Besides pew-rents and payments for chapel expenses, there was a penny a week for this charitable object, and two-pence for the other, quarterly collections for missions and so forth, so that she found membership quite an expensive privilege, and left accordingly.

B.—If the Church of Christ was a voluntary association of members for their mutual benefit, it would be a fitting inquiry to make of any, “Have you paid up your share?” But we have already seen our collective standing to be on totally different ground. “Subject to Christ in everything.” It is by His will we have been brought together, and we refrain from dealing in discipline with this form of evil; 1stly, because we have no instruction how to deal with such cases; 2ndly, because we have the assurance that the Lord takes them in hand Himself; and 3rdly, because the result of our interference would be disastrous.

E.—I should very much like you to prove your third point first.

B.—Willingly. “Doing good and communicating” is, we will suppose, a characteristic wholly wanting in some brother or sister. Well now, the Word of God speaks of these as sacrifices wherewith God is well pleased. (Heb. xiii. 16.) You remember that sacrifices in the Old Testament had to be perfect, having nothing superfluous or lacking about them, or blemish of any kind, and a little examination will show you the same principle in the New. Turn to 2 Cor. ix. 7, a verse that bears directly on the matter in hand.

Four things go to make up an acceptable sacrifice.

First. "According as he purposeth in his heart, *i.e.*, he should make deliberate choice beforehand to do it.

Second. "Not grudgingly," lit., *not with grief*, *i.e.*, without regret on account of its loss.

Third. "Or of necessity," lit., *of compulsion*, *i.e.*, without being urged or overpersuaded to do so.

Fourth. "A cheerful giver," lit., *with hilarity*, *i.e.*, with a beaming countenance.

Now if I bring pressure to bear upon a selfish brother or sister in respect of doing good and communicating, how can it produce a sacrifice answering to these conditions? It were as easy for us to repair a crushed honeycomb, as to accomplish the end our Lord desires.

E.—But the expenses, which are incurred for the general good, should be contributed to from a sense of duty.

B.—Granted. Yet, if the withholding of this on the part of any amount, in our judgment, even to *fraud*, we are distinctly told "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." (Rom. xii. 19.)

E.—What Scripture have we that tells us the Lord takes in hand those who neglect to care for His labourers in the gospel?

B.—Do you remember that solemn passage, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Gal. vi. 7.) Perhaps out of a hundred who read that text scarcely two connect it with the previous one which expresses the Lord's mind on the subject. I wish I could give

you an idea of the meaning of the word *mock*. It is not the mock of *open insult* that the Lord suffered for our sake ; nor yet the mock of the *curled lip* of the unbeliever, that Peter at Pentecost, and Paul on Mars Hill, were met by. The word in this passage conveys the idea of a toss of the head, or "I know, but I don't care," just the attitude of professing Christendom. "So hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel," is the general precept. "Let him that is taught in the Word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things," is the application to the individual believer, and the solemn consequences of neglect are set forth in the words, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." We do not reap one seed for one seed sown, but a great many more.

E.—But many, who never give a thought to their duty in this respect, appear to flourish quite as much as those who do.

B.—Rest assured it is only in appearance. When we set aside the Lord's commands He has to set aside our petitions. Not only do such pray in vain, but sometimes have recourse to a book, for the power to pray has gone from them. And further, no kind of spiritual food satisfies them, and they starve on that which feeds many.

E.—I suppose that in communicating, as it is called, with those that teach us in all good things, our gifts should be confined to those who have little or no means of their own.

B.—On what principle I fail to see. What is given

to the poor saint is to fulfil the Lord's will in relieving his necessities ; what we give to those who teach us, or labour in our midst, is given in obedience to His Word, as an acknowledgment of benefit received from Him through them, be they rich or be they poor.

E.—But some of the former have distinctly stated that they have enough, and direct the saints to remember others who have not as much as they.

B.—Yes, and I make bold to say that these dear brethren have in their unselfishness misled the Church thereby. If a wealthy brother has given me help in learning the mind of Christ, I owe him an acknowledgment, and *to him* belongs the privilege of passing on the gift to his fellow labourer who has less of this world's goods. If there are two who have ministered instruction to me, the one rich and the other poor, and I am only able to minister to one, then by all means let it be to the poor, for he has, according to the Word, a double claim.

E.—Well to be sure ! I don't think you would get many to believe that they should give under any circumstances to those who have all their wants supplied.

B.—And yet there is nothing I have said from the beginning of which I feel more persuaded. I could take you to meetings of Brethren in the lowest condition of feebleness, and if you ask how they came to this pass, you have only to look a little back into their history. A devoted servant of Christ began the work there, and out of his own private means

built for them a place of worship, became really the dispenser of bounties of all kinds to the poor, and discouraged, it may be, their depriving themselves of anything for his sake. By-and-by the Lord took him to be with Himself, and the little company, though quite at home in the 1st of Ephesians, and their privileges in connection with the Lord's table, having never been taught the lessons contained in ix. of 1st Corinthians, allowed the poorer brethren, who succeeded him in pastoral work, to labour without any kind of acknowledgment. So the Lord, after a time, removed His neglected servants to other spheres of labour.

There were a couple who kept a little shop in one such place as I have been describing, who had been praying for fifteen years, according to their own account, for someone to be sent to labour among them. The meeting had been getting supplies on the Lord's Day from a distance, as there were no brethren left among them who could even read. The question was asked if they had during these fifteen years ever entertained one of these "supplies," who had left his home on the Lord's Day to minister to them, or had given him so much as a cup of tea. The answer was in the negative. "They did not feel it was their place to do so." I do not wonder at the prayer being made in vain.

E.—Nor I either. Are the directions for the relief of the poor saints as strongly enjoined in the Word?

B.—The apostle John, you know, questions the love of God dwelling in the soul of any who is indifferent to the need of his poor brother (1 John iii. 17), and in

Epistle of James we read that expressions of sympathy will not do instead of succour (James ii. 16). And in confirmation thereof, let me ask you to turn to Gal. ii. 10. Here we actually find the apostles at Jerusalem reminding even Paul and Barnabas, who had already given up all for Christ, *that they should remember the poor!*

E.—Besides these, there are those who go abroad as missionaries to be remembered; there are numberless agencies for the relief of the sinful and suffering that appeal to us; and then the question arises, How can a widow who can lay by only a shilling a week, compass it all?

B.—She need not fear nor yet be bewildered. It is no Pharaoh or Nebuchadnezzar who has bought us, but One Who gave Himself for us, and the promise stands—"God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." (2 Cor. ix. 8.)

E.—But I should like a few practical hints as to the relative importance of the various causes which we are responsible to maintain.

B.—We cannot maintain ourselves for a single hour, but as our goings are held up by Him who is our strength. All we have to do is to follow certain directions, and then instead of being burdened by all these claims, we shall be able calmly and joyfully to take up one by one, and meet it however narrow our circumstances may be.

E.—Do tell me what they are.

B.—Turn to 1 Cor. xvi. 2: “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him.” Have you ever looked at this verse as the direction of the Master to each of His stewards, or as a piece of advice which it would be well for some to follow?

E.—Well, I cannot say that I have taken it as applicable to my own case, for I do not receive weekly, or even monthly, what comes into my hands.

B.—We will suppose then, a brother or sister receives a certain sum once a quarter. Need that circumstance cause them to set aside this rule? By no means. Let the habit be formed of taking all we receive into the Lord’s presence, His word declares that we should provide for our own, and specially those of our own house. (1 Tim. v. 8.) Moreover, that we should provide things honest in the sight of all men—that we should owe no man anything. (Rom. xii. 17, xiii. 8.) Well let me seek to discharge these duties so that the name of God be not reproached by them that are without.

E.—But at this point I may say that, perhaps, in doing this the whole sum may be expended, or not found sufficient.

B.—In such case, I do not well to close the matter. I am bound to *remind myself* of all that the Lord would have me *remember*, and pray that He would enable me to fulfil His will in caring for the poor, for those who labour in the gospel, for those who take it to the heathen, and to show hospitality to those He directs to my dwelling.

And while He keeps me waiting for an answer, let me continue labouring in prayer concerning each and all of these things. I never yet met with a child of God who did so, but who was enabled to set aside a certain portion of the next money that came into his hands, inasmuch as the *constant bent* of his mind had been in this direction, and led him to do without what he formerly considered necessaries, that he might have the privilege of laying somewhat at the Lord's feet.

E.—And suppose he did so, and set aside, we will say a pound, how should he divide it?

B.—That is quite an after consideration. The godly habit which we should seek to form, is that of setting aside all we can according to the four conditions laid down in the Word, and increasing therein as we experience more of His love and faithfulness. Whatever the channel we may be directed to let any of our gifts flow into, should be taken from what we have thus set apart, and not from what belongs to current expenditure.

E.—Why so?

B.—Because great stress is laid upon our being *prepared* to give. The eighth and ninth chapter of 2nd Corinthians clearly show that, according to the willingness formerly expressed by the saints, there should be a performance in the matter of *setting aside what they had promised*. That instead of being given with doubtful readiness in answer to a *special appeal*, it should be there ready when the Lord sent His servant for it.

E.— You disapprove then of special appeals ?

B.— As a rule the gift forthcoming on the spur of the moment, that had not before been yielded to the Lord, or formed part of the sum that was held at His bidding, is likely to be a blemished sacrifice. It needs to be given with deliberate purpose of heart, with no after regret, no present pressure, but with a beaming face, to be well pleasing to the Lord.

E.— Do you think we should never give to any work of the Lord, or relieve the want of any of His children without thinking about it a long time first ?

B.— No, that is not at all my meaning, though, if a doubt crosses the mind as to its being the right thing to do, by all means take time to consider ; but the beauty of God's arrangement lies in this, that whenever a case presents itself we are ready to act, if in communion with Him, because there is the little store already devoted that He would have us draw from while it lasts. Where this Divine rule is not followed how different the feeling of the giver. Instead of calmly and happily listening to all, and as a steward then disposing of his master's money with which he has been entrusted, there is the uncertain humour, the suspicious manner, the plausible excuse of the man who feels himself imposed on by "so many calls."

E.— Yes, I quite see the difference, and am expecting to hear from you some practical hints as to what takes the first and what the second place in the carrying out of these precepts. Suppose, for instance, I had set aside a pound—

B.—*That* I shall carefully avoid doing, as I find no directions about it in the Word of God ; but what I shall next bring before you is the difference between the “ Lord’s money ” thus reserved and the revenues collected by any earthly king, which are expended in surrounding himself with pomp and luxury. Every penny of your Lord’s money is, you may say, a seed, which it is His intention to return to you in a harvest of blessing, when scattered according to His will.

E.—You remind me again of the text, “ Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

B.—Exactly. Let me give you an illustration. In the latter verses of the chapter we have had so much before us (2 Cor. ix,) the apostle, alluding to the gifts they had bestowed, points to three results :

1st.—The supplying the wants of the saints.

2nd.—The occasion of their increased thanksgiving to God.

3rd.—The prayer of these saints on behalf of those who remembered them.

The gift to the missionary is described as a sweet savour to the Lord. (Phil. iv. 18.)* In the matter of hospitality, if we are exhorted not to forget to entertain strangers, the immediate profit to ourselves is

* There is nothing that has been a greater cheer to me than the distinct growth of interest in mission work among ourselves of late years. The demand for “ Echoes of Service ” is one indication ; the amount of the collective gifts we have been able to distribute is another, the giving of their own selves on the part of some of our number, the best of all. I should be sorry to mention the amount of our yearly collection, as our Wesleyan brethren might be more inclined to smile at our weakness than to recognise our growth. The babe, however, thrives, and promises to become a *proper child* in due time.

added, "for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." What if some we entertain for the Lord's sake do not answer this description? The miner digs many a yard of earth without regret for one yard that yields him the precious ore; but in our case there is not one whom we take in, or contribute to the comfort of, for the Master's sake, but it is acknowledged by Him. We shall in no wise lose our reward, though it may not be bestowed at the time.

E.—The matter you have last named is surely limited to comparatively few, there being numbers whose circumstances do not allow them to practise it. Besides your theory of devoting what is set apart for the Lord is impracticable here, for showing hospitality means giving out of current expenses.

B.—Yes, you have me there apparently; but after all it comes to this, that if the Lord send any to abide for a time under my roof, and the increased expenses interfere with my giving in the accustomed channels, I have only to put this before Him in prayer, and be willing that He should do as He will with His own. You are mistaken in thinking that hospitality is only the privilege of a few. It begins with a cup of cold water, or in our cold climate you may substitute for it one of hot tea, and so far from *waiting* for the guest to be sent to you (Rom. xii. 13), the words, "given to hospitality," show the mind of Christ to be in favour of "*pursuing*" the guest, for such is the literal meaning of the word used.

Now in this matter the Lord is equally careful about our doing the right thing in the right way, for Peter says (1 Pet. iv. 9), "Use hospitality one to

another without ‘grudging’”—*i.e.*, without the *mutterings*, with which we are often tempted to “relieve our feelings,” as we say, but which at the same time mar the sacrifice. One especial feature in this service for God is, that it directs our sympathies beyond the members of the family circle or Church where He has placed us, and enables us to manifest our one-ness with children of God of every denomination, and even to bring those who are without, into the most favourable position for receiving the truth of God.

E.—Still you must own that the circumstances and position in life of many of us put this line of service out of our reach.

B.—In the common acceptation of the term no doubt. But the willingness to give up a portion of our time to conduct the stranger from one place to another, to go and assist him in any business he hath need of, to carry or convey a parcel for him, or to aid with our gifts any who *are* able to invite him into their house, shews a heart that is obedient to the precept; and of such it can be said, “If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that which a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.” (2 Cor. viii. 12.)

E.—Now don’t you think that many professing Christians, who shut their eyes to all these precepts of the Word of God, claim to be “providing for their own,” and that as they have not sufficient (according to their view of the case) think they are justified in so doing?

B.—There is, indeed, a spiritual disease, the serious

character of which is little understood. Sometimes it is of gradual growth, in proportion to worldly prosperity ; sometimes it comes as a sudden transformation, when what is called "a fortune" comes to hand ; and if it could only be examined in the light of the Word, it would appear as hideous as Nebuchadnezzar grazing in his own fields with hair like eagles' feathers, and nails like birds' claws.

E.—How so ?

B.—Because the victims of it lose the honourable estate of intelligent stewardship, and sink to the level of the dog, whose one business it is to bark at all who venture on the premises, and fly upon the stranger who would touch anything within the range of his chain.

E.—Is it possible to restore one who has fallen into this condition ?

B.—With God all things are possible. The restoration means a *conversion* such as Peter experienced, and it is effectual only by the same means. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and the soul must catch the glance of the Lord's eye (so to speak) in order to know how deeply it has fallen.

The Family Discipline.

E.—I was asked the other day by one who had found blessing in attending the meetings, how she should apply to be received into fellowship.

B.—Those who are desirous of coming into fellowship are invited to meet two of our elder brethren in the vestry of one of the chapels, on a certain evening of the month, of which notice is given the previous Lord's Day at each of the meetings. If it were needful these brethren would give two or more evenings in the month to conversation with these or any others who were anxious about their souls.

E.—And if they are satisfied about a candidate being truly converted, what is the next step to take?

B.—They are accustomed to mention it at the next Friday evening meeting, so that if any of the brethren present have anything to say on the case, or have reason to suggest a postponement, they may do so.

E.—Who constitute the Friday meeting?

B.—Some of those whom the Church has chosen to take charge of and distribute its gifts to the poor—(*i.e.*, the deacons) and a few other brethren whose time

is chiefly given to visiting from house to house, and to the ministry of the Word.

E.—And if they also approve of his or her admission into fellowship, is the matter settled?

B.—No, the names and addresses of those who have been approved are mentioned to the Church at its next meeting, and two brethren from among those present at that meeting are asked to see and converse with them on behalf of the Church. When several names are proposed quite a considerable number of brethren are entrusted with making these enquiries.

E.—What further steps are taken?

B.—The names and addresses of those proposed for fellowship are read out on the Lord's Day morning before the meeting commences, in order that if any scriptural reason for their not being admitted is known to any present, it may be told to one of the elder brethren during the following week, and this is repeated every Lord's Day till the next monthly Church meeting takes place.

E.—But this must be rather a formidable thing for a *girl* to look forward to, is it not?

B.—“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” If rightly instructed, her heart will not shrink from confessing Christ. It would not be seemly for her to declare her faith in the Lord Jesus in person before the many; but the same effect is obtained in harmony with the sphere assigned to her in the Word of God, when this simple fact is made known to the Assembly.

E.—Should any circumstances be brought to light unfavourable to the candidate's reception, what then?

B.—Simply the name is withdrawn from the notice paper, and the brethren who have undertaken the case state at the next Church meeting that they are not prepared to report.

E.—Does this mean that no more is done in the matter?

B.—Not at all; it only means that the candidate is more fully instructed and watched over, and the reception deferred to a future day.

E.—Well, suppose the brethren are satisfied, what do they do?

B.—They are both called upon to state at the next Church meeting the result of their interviews and inquiries concerning life and walk. When this is done, if recommended, the Church is called upon to state any objection of a scriptural kind to his or her admission into fellowship. If no voice is raised the candidates are called in and given the right hand of fellowship.

E.—Supposing a *sister* present at the Church meeting knew of anything wrong in one proposed, what liberty has she of stating it?

B.—She is at liberty to communicate privately at once to any brother present in the meeting the facts that have come to her knowledge, and by him these are made known to the meeting.

E.—Were the members always received thus on the report of two visitors?

B.—In early days, when the number of the Church was small, those who were received had to give an account of themselves in the way of confessing their faith before all.

E.—How are those received into fellowship who have already been acknowledged as Christians?

B.—They are required to bring a letter of commendation from the Church with which they have been connected, except in cases where their life and testimony is well known and approved.

E.—Suppose they were unable to obtain such a letter as you speak of, how then?

B.—They would have to be proposed to the Church in the usual way, and visited before they are received.

E.—If a Christian, happening to be in Bristol, desires to break bread on a Lord's day, how should application be made?

B.—To some brother in the meeting to whom the believer is known, and the name and place of residence of the stranger, together with that of the brother by whom he or she is introduced, are made known to the meeting along with the usual notices before commencing worship.

E.—Are not some admitted who are known to no one in fellowship?

B.—Occasionally a card is given in of such, and the stranger breaks bread on his or her own responsibility. There have been cases of those breaking bread whose presence is not intimated in any way, but these are irregularities which are to be condemned.

E.—If a believer had once been introduced to the meeting, such introduction is of course unnecessary the following Lord's day. Thus there may be those in actual fellowship for an indefinite time without being received into the Church, or known to any.

B.—This has indeed happened, but our endeavour is to call upon such and ascertain whether they see their way to continue with us, stating that in that case we should be glad to recognise them in fellowship. It is sometimes the case that those whom we are fully satisfied about as consistent Christians, demur from some cause or other to become identified with us, and it only remains for us to consider them as in fellowship in spite of themselves, by watching over them in the same way.

E.—It seems to me that it would be so easy to introduce oneself without going through the ordeal of the enquiry and Church meetings, that I wonder all who are able do not choose it.

B.—But if one who thus obtained fellowship with us was found, on being visited, not to have been *recognised as a believer* previously, it would lead to exposure, and to the withdrawal of all the privileges of fellowship.

E.—Is the bringing of a letter of commendation from any Church or minister of the gospel sufficient as an introduction to fellowship?

B.—Yes, as a rule, unless we have some reason to believe that the Church or minister is lax in walk, or unsound in doctrine.

E.—Your mention of unsound doctrine reminds

me of a question I have long wanted to put, and that is : How would any speaker be dealt with who brought it forward in his ministry ?

B.—It is usual for two brethren who have been present and heard it to wait upon him privately, and ascertain whether it was error in doctrine, or in the way he happened to express himself. If it should be the former, the matter is brought before the Friday meeting.

E.—What follows ?

B.—The brother himself, who has taught doctrine either false or dangerous from the way it has been uttered, is invited to attend the next meeting, to which are also invited other brethren of acknowledged sound judgment, so that, if by any chance he has been misunderstood, he may explain himself. In some cases it is only a wholesome caution that is given, in others, he is asked wholly to forbear from future ministry among us.

E.—But is not false doctrine sometimes of a nature that demands exclusion from fellowship ?

B.—Certainly. I was not thinking of an extreme case, but only of such as, in faithfulness to the Lord, and in the interest of His people, we are bound to prevent being *taught*.

E.—I wish you could give me an illustration.

B.—Take then that of "Infant Baptism." This is a tradition of man that we must by all means silence, as the Word of God requires the answer of *a good conscience* in those who are baptized. (1 Pet. iii. 21.)

No record exists of an infant being baptized till the third century after Christ. But while we could not listen to a brother who put forth the tradition in which he was probably cradled, we cannot see it right to refuse fellowship with the godly, who are as yet unenlightened on this doctrine.

E.—Your allusion to Infant Baptism reminds me of a question I wanted before to ask you: that is, Whether there is any occasion for me to be baptized by immersion, seeing I was dedicated to the Lord in infancy by baptism?

B.—The answer to your question is immediately found by putting another to you, viz.: Was the water sprinkled on your infant face in obedience to any command of our Lord Jesus or the Apostles, as contained in the New Testament?

E.—Not directly, it may be, but as households were baptized (and the form of baptism is non-essential), might we not reasonably conclude that infants shared in the rite?

B.—There are only *four* households mentioned as having been baptized. *First*, that of Lydia, the seller of purple, whose household might have included her men-servants; and the last verse of Acts xvi. points to that conclusion, for as yet there were no converts in Europe out of the jailer's household. *Second*, the jailer's household; and in his case it is stated that he rejoiced, *believing in God with all his house*. *Third*, that of Crispus, of whose household the same fact is stated. (Acts. xviii. 8; 1 Cor. i. 14.) *Fourth*, of Stephanas, the members of whose

household are described (1 Cor. xvi. 15), as having *addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints*. These households bear evidence of having the essential requisite according to Scripture, of having believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. If in your case the condition was not present, then by all the rules of our obedience the ordinance was null and void, though the dedication was accepted.

E.—But I make a difference between the children of believing parents and those of heathen ; does it not say in 1 Cor. vii., when only one parent is a believer, “but now are they holy.” What do you make of that?

B.—You prove too much if you make it prove the existence of a new nature, for the same word in the original is used of the unbelieving parent. Thus the unbelieving husband is *made holy* by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is *made holy* by the husband : else were your children unclean ; but now are they *holy*. Whatever may be the meaning of the word *holy* in this connection, it no more warrants the baptism of the babe for the parent’s sake than it warrants the baptism of an infidel husband or wife whose partner has been brought to the Lord.

E.—Well, I altogether disclaim that I was made a child of God and an heir of the kingdom of heaven, but still I cling to having been dedicated to God by what my believing parents held to be baptism, and that is the real thing, is it not?

B.—Indeed, you are mistaken. Baptism is *not* a dedication, *not* a means of or a help to salvation, but

it is my public acknowledgment of *having been saved* according to the form that the Lord has laid down for me. We have been digressing from the subject of *discipline* as exercised in the Church, but it is a matter concerning which there is an urgent call for *self-discipline*. I mean that each unbaptized brother and sister should ask himself and herself, "What doth my Lord require of me?" "What hinders my rendering full obedience?"

E.—Supposing a case, however, where the ordinance of baptism by sprinkling is submitted to by a believer who was *not* baptized in infancy, is there any further occasion of uneasiness on account of not having been immersed?

B.—We find in Acts xix. that some who had been baptized "unto John's baptism," were yet not answering all the conditions that became believers in the Lord Jesus, and when the Lord's will was declared to them they were willing to be baptized again. I can well enter into the case you now mention, for it was my own. The dear man of God, through whom I was led to confess Christ thirty years ago, when he found I had not been sprinkled as an infant, took his hands full of water out of a basin and poured it on my head. According to his view of the case I was then "baptized." It was not till twenty years had passed, when present at the burial of one of our number who had fallen asleep, that I was struck with the unmistakable meaning of the word *to bury*, putting the body into the earth and covering it with the earth. I knew well enough that the word *baptize* meant *immerse*, but I took refuge in the possibility of its

having also another meaning, as insisted on by so many expositors. But this word *bury* was one concerning which there could not be two opinions, and I remembered that in Romans vi. and Col. ii. we are spoken of as being "*buried with Him by and in baptism.*" Not a shadow of doubt remained on my mind that the whole force of the type lay in putting the body for the moment beneath the water, which instantly covered it, and raising it up again, because it showed forth that the eternal life we became possessed of in believing in Jesus was purchased by His death, and is secure to us through His resurrection, and thus we show forth our union with Him in both. I knew that I must be *immersed* if I would wholly follow the Lord, and by His grace I lost no time in obeying Him. How many unanswered prayers, how many perplexities in walk and doctrine, how much barrenness of soul and sorrow of heart may be the result of quietly setting aside truth when it is first revealed to the soul!

E.—But when a Christian is so thoroughly known by his walk to belong to Christ, that there is no question as to his being dead and risen with Him, of what practical value is baptism?

B.—Thoughts like these might have filled the mind of John the Baptist, as he beheld the spotless Lamb of God descend into the water. The future of that Life could be no holier than the past, so he *forbade* Him. Our Lord's answer showed that the Father's will being such, that was an *all sufficient reason*. A deep mystery truly, but it appears to me, that as our Lord united Himself in covenant relationship with the Jew

by submitting to circumcision, so would He link Himself with the Gentile portion of His Church by being Himself baptized. What more beautiful instance could one desire of His readiness to go *out of His way* in order to draw a disciple nearer to Himself, than the narrative in Matt. xvii. 27?

E.—Yet after all you do not consider the ordinance to be *essential*, do you?

B.—Oh! grievous, grievous words to fall from the lips of one who fully understands the Lord's mind and is quite able to obey it! If you turn to Numbers xix., you will find that an Israelite, under the law, by burying his dead, necessarily became defiled, and was for seven days reckoned unclean. Moreover, to provide for his cleansing, four more people had to be defiled and *bathe their flesh in water*.

I call your attention to this Scripture only as affording a *sample* of what the handwriting of ordinances that was against us (Col. ii. 14) contained, which our Lord nailed to the cross along with our past guilt and future doom. When the treasurer of Queen Candace heard from the lips of Philip, that for these unspeakable mercies, the only ordinance of acknowledgment required was that the believer's body should be for one instant, and once for all, put into the water and raised therefrom to show forth union with the Saviour in death and resurrection; he called to his coachman to stop as soon as a pool came in sight, and urged Philip to embrace the present opportunity. Was it not so?

And are you, with years of experience, it may be, of a Saviour's love, and a far ampler record of what

He has in store for those whom He has redeemed, than Philip could then have declared—Are you going to say to HIM, “I don’t care about it, and I don’t consider it essential,” or does not the tongue cleave to the roof of your mouth?

E.—What would you cite as an instance of doctrine, the holding of which would exclude from fellowship?

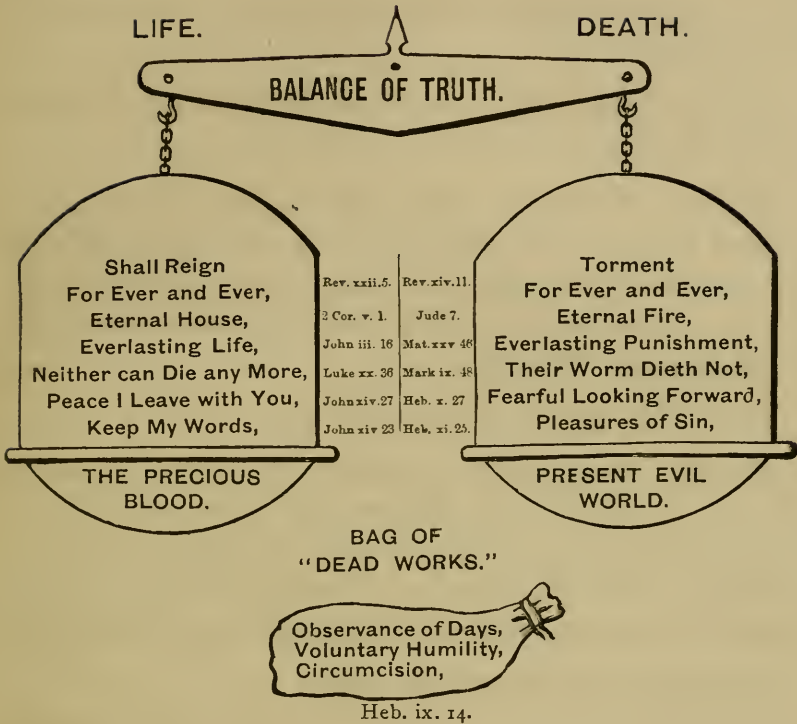
B.—That very popular doctrine of the non-eternity of punishment, which has been aptly described as “The Gospel according to Satan.” We can have no fellowship with those who are known to hold it because it is another gospel which we have not received, and Gal. i. 9 puts a ban upon such.

E.—Tell me now, how would you prove this heresy to be the introduction of another gospel?

B.—I will do so at once, and in order to illustrate the subject, I have drawn a diagram representing in figure what the gospel is according to the “Apostles’ doctrine.” (*See opposite page.*)

The Word of God hangs life and death in an even balance. On the one side, that which sustains all is the redeeming blood, which enables the washed ones to keep the Redeemer’s words—to enjoy His peace: no more death, but everlasting life, an eternal house, and a reign which endures for ever and ever.

On the other side we see this present evil world, the pleasures of sin, the fearful looking for of judgment, the worm that never dies, everlasting punishment, eternal fire, torment for ever and ever. *The same words as to duration in either case.*



Now what were the Galatians doing? Giving heed to teachers who would throw in the bag of "*dead works*," circumcision, voluntary humility, observance of days, months, and years, into the scale of *life*. You dare to do it! says Paul. If you add to our gospel you make another gospel of it. If an angel from heaven disturbs the balance of truth *let him be accursed*. Now what is man doing to the gospel in these days. Just taking the eternal, everlasting, and ever and ever out of the scale of *Death*. It becomes us earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints, and say, "If the addition to one scale by the Galatians called down a curse, shall not this

taking away from the other scale arouse the wrath of the Lamb!

E.—Has the Church at Bethesda ever had to deal with this heresy?

B.—Some sixteen years ago a popular evangelist visited Bristol and preached for a short time among us. When it was found in conversation that he held this, it was intimated to him that no further fellowship could be held with him.

E.—What course did he take?

B.—He remained for some time in Bristol, preaching first in the Victoria Rooms, and then in an Iron Chapel erected by some who were attached to him as a teacher; two or three from Bethesda were of this number, and, alas, received and spread the evil doctrine.

E.—How were they dealt with?

B.—Their case was considered, and every means used to change their views. All means failing, they were put out of fellowship, and if an illustration were wanting to the principle, "If thy hand cause thee to offend cut it off and cast it from thee," it would be found in the anguish submitted to by those who acted in discipline for the truth's sake. That this discipline was used of God for restoration of soul in some cases was a deep cause of thankfulness.

E.—The doom of the impenitent is something so terrible that, if it were only realized, heart and flesh would fail, and reason itself totter; so it is not to be wondered at that every means should be used for explaining it away.

B.—True, yet what a responsibility is incurred by so doing! It is not that we deny God's power to mitigate the punishment, or claim to know all His purposes concerning them; we are simply in the position of ambassadors with a message from our King, who gives *no hope* to those who will not be reconciled to God, and we dare not alter its terms. When our own souls get bewildered at the decrees of Him who has declared that His name is *Love*, let us look forward to the day when He shall Himself unfold the mystery to us, by the living fountains of water.

E.—To return now to the method of dealing with evil doctrine, &c. What course is taken in those cases where the brethren that meet are not of one mind as to any error held, or agreed as to the method of dealing with it?

B.—The matter is laid before the Lord in prayer, and any further action is stayed till their next meeting.

E.—But supposing only one dissented from the judgment of the rest, would action still be deferred?

B.—Yes, because the Word says, "Be ye all of one mind." We do not read it as *advice*, but as a *commandment*. The Lord may have some purpose to accomplish by deferring the judgment on a case, and to the praise of His name we can say, He has enabled this Church to maintain discipline while submitting one to another in the fear of the Lord.

E.—Well, suppose all at the Friday meeting are agreed that the one whose case has been the subject of inquiry, should be excluded from fellowship, is the act performed by them?

B.—Never. We distinctly hold that as none are received into fellowship but by the Church, so none should be excluded therefrom but with its consent. If the handful of brethren who prayerfully considered the case could say to the Church, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us" (Acts xv. 28), as was truly said on one occasion by the Apostles—they might take upon themselves the responsibility: but knowing how easily we are all mistaken, how often unconsciously led by some mind stronger than our own in forming a decision, the brethren simply by the mouth of one of their number lay before the Church at its next meeting the judgment they have arrived at and the reasons for it. The Lord's help is again entreated for guidance in doing exactly as He would have done. If silence ensues for a considerable time, it is understood that the judgment of the few is ratified by the many, and two brethren are appointed to convey to the erring one what that judgment is.

E.—But if one or more dissent, is the whole matter deferred for a month and no action taken?

B.—In cases of importance another Church meeting is held during the following week, but in no case is action taken as long as we are unable to obey the order, "Be of one mind." (Phil. ii. 2.)

E.—Would not the judgment of a majority be a simple means of bringing matters to a point?

B.—Simple, but disastrous. The "radical" principle in God's house is like rot in an apple. It easily begins, and as easily spreads, and nothing can make it sound again.

E.—But surely there is nothing wrong in deciding by a majority? It is the way among all dissenters, I believe.

B.—But where is the warrant for doing so from the Word of God in things pertaining to His house? Whether a majority or a minority are right in a matter, entirely depends on the spiritual health of the assembly. In having recourse to this method, man is arrayed against man, and the very foundations of brotherly love are shaken; but if we are agreed that we are not in a fit state to act towards one another until we have submitted to the Word ourselves, it is better to meet seven times over a case, if we have not arrived at oneness of mind in six deliberations, than swerve from this course. Then I can tell you that the *weight of the decision* when it is arrived at, the *waiting on God* which it has necessitated, and the *welding together* in brotherly love of those who have thus submitted themselves to one another in the fear of the Lord, is a threefold blessing beyond anything that those could conceive who would prefer man's hasty method of decision.

E.—But tell me now, cannot the presence of one or two who see no necessity for separation on account of any sin that is not an open scandal, effectually hinder discipline?

B.—That is just what I thought at first. It was akin to the query that crosses one's mind in looking at those great orphan houses on Ashley Down. Suppose one day there should be no food for that multitude? The reply given is that the work is the Lord's, who maintains it to this hour, and as long as

it is carried on in obedience to the principle which He has honoured, He will not fail to provide for His own. Suffice it to say, He has enabled His people meeting at Bethesda to cleave to His Word as to their principles of action, and yet to judge evil walk and doctrine with impartiality. He has, in answer to prayer, restrained the presence or restrained the tongue of those who would hinder the carrying out of His will as He alone can ; and His presence is our only safeguard against all the supposed cases of difficulty that ingenuity can suggest.

E.—Are there cases of discipline where any are *suspended* for a time from fellowship ?

B.—We have no Scripture for so doing. If any have erred so as to call for a rebuke, we have authority to give the rebuke (1 Tim. v. 20 ; 2 Tim. iv. 2 ; Titus i. 13 ; ii. 15), but if any have so sinned as to be put away from the table of the Lord, it is because in their present condition separation from fellowship is the course pointed out by the Word. Their restoration to fellowship must depend on the restoration of soul the Lord is pleased to give them. If any were suspended from communion for so many weeks or months prospectively, how could we tell that at the end of that period they would be any more fit for the table of the Lord than they now are ?

E.—It just occurs to me to ask whether the brethren can help us when ministry is *unedifying* without being *unsound*.

B.—I do not think anything would surprise you

more than to hear the difference of judgment expressed by those whose opinion you might ask concerning ministry you found it hard to listen to with patience. Some admire and profit by that which others lightly esteem ; and if we make up our minds that nothing good can be expected from certain speakers we are likely to lose much that we should retain if we held a contrary opinion. I have been told by brethren of large experience of a more excellent way of dealing with unedifying ministry than that of raising a protest against it. It is for those who feel tried by the frequency or quality of any brother's ministry to meet regularly to pray about it ; and the Lord has either increased his gift or shut his mouth. It seems to me that if we were fitly joined together as a spiritual family we ought to be able to tell a brother that we do not understand the drift of his remarks, or suggest to him something that would improve his ministry.

E.—Do the meetings at Unity Street, the Gospel Hall (Nicholas Road), and at Bedminster, owe their separate existence to any difference of judgment on doctrine or discipline ?

B.—No. Thank God there has never been any but the most cordial relation existing between us. The work at Unity Street had its rise in the labours of our beloved brother, Major Tireman, and ere he fell asleep, the Church there formed itself into a sort of Independent Baptist body, with its pastor, for whom a certain salary is contributed.

E.—How came they to depart from the principles of the parent Church in this respect ?

B.—Well, you see, the mass of those brought in were both poor and ignorant, and liberty of ministry in this case is often not very edifying. I dare say you may have noticed in some of our city gardens one tree that thrives, where all attempts to get flowers and other bushes to grow have been very discouraging, so the owner resolves to leave this one tree and pave all the rest; and as he sits under its shadow, congratulates himself that the weeds, slugs, and dirt, are all things of the past.

Quite true: but those paving-stones have settled it once for all that there are to be no more flowers or fruit. So human arrangements can relieve us of some of our Church sorrows, but the question that makes me uneasy is, Which does my Lord want, a court or a garden?

The meetings at the Gospel Hall and Temperance Hall (Bedminster), were also begun by those who were in fellowship with us, and their meetings continue to be held on very much the same principles as our own. We constantly see the faces of these dear brethren at our meetings, and to some extent aid them in Gospel work.

E.—Do you know if the principles of Church government in which you have been instructing me, are those generally carried out among Brethren?

B.—I am not sufficiently informed to answer your question, but I will endeavour by way of comparison to describe the procedure among those who are known as the “Exclusive Brethren.”

E.—Who are they?

B.—I must reserve my reply for a future occasion,

but it will be sufficient for our present purpose if I describe them as a large number of assemblies, great and small, who claim to be on "Divine Ground," which in a few words amounts to this: "There is one body" in Eph. iv. 4, instead of being the whole redeemed family answering to the word Church in Matt. xvi., is understood to have its *expression* in their many assemblies acting under one authority, and the result is that: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" is construed to mean that one of their assemblies being defiled by the allowance of evil walk or doctrine—defiles all the rest; and the command: "Put away from yourselves that wicked person," enjoins on them the excommunication of the whole assembly where the evil exists. The desire to clear themselves from all connection with a certain evil doctrine gave rise to this form of discipline, and such was their zeal for promoting the "holiness that becomes God's house," that it was ruled that an assembly might become defiled by one who was personally blameless in walk and doctrine, if that person still held fellowship with a "*defiled*" assembly, and should be dealt with accordingly.

E.—They are rightly termed Exclusives. But go on.

B.—When any case calling for discipline occurs among them, a few of the leading brethren look into the matter, and having come to a judgment on it, ask those in fellowship to remain behind on the following Lord's day morning after the close of the meeting. The case is then brought to their notice, and they are duly informed, it may be, that so-and-so is no longer to be considered in fellowship.

If all concur in the sentence, well and good ; but if there are those present who think the matter has not been fairly stated, or full justice done, the case is referred by them to the Saturday night meeting in London, where the supreme control of all matters of doctrine and discipline rests.

It has happened that the judgment of this meeting reversed the decision of the local brethren, which, of course, produced a very unhappy and divided feeling in the meeting where the trouble had been, and effectually prevented any action being taken afterwards where difficulties made it possible that their judgment should again be found fault with.

Now just try and think for a moment of the fearful position of responsibility those are occupying who undertake to maintain the unity of a body estimated by one of themselves (Andrew Miller)* to number 750 meetings in the United Kingdom. What gifts of the Spirit should they possess ; what stores of grace and understanding ought they not to have, what direct guidance of the Holy Ghost in order to fulfil the demands made on them by seven hundred assemblies ! If by chance they are led by some mind stronger than the rest, and that one be walking in the flesh, then will he communicate his evil ways to all these, and an organization for keeping clear of evil become the surest means of maintaining and spreading it.

E.—Have you reason to believe that this has been the case ?

B.—There was an occurrence some six years ago,

* "The Brethren," page 163.

which will illustrate my meaning and show the working of their system. A certain meeting in fellowship with them had been in a bad condition for years. What the nature of the evil was has not transpired, but Mr. K——, the ablest expositor of their principles, and at that time one of the foremost brethren in the ruling meeting, acknowledged and urged at the meeting that it should not be owned any longer. It was, perhaps, a complicated case, and as such, the help of the ruling brethren had been sought, time after time, in vain. Probably they had enough business on their hands as it was.

“Separation from evil God’s principle of Unity,” had always been a watchword with exclusive brethren, and an ex-clergyman, who had already been admitted among them, and was resident in the place of which I am now speaking, thought the only remedy for the unhappy state of things then existing was the formation of a new meeting. Dr. C——, one of the first of the “Brethren,” so called, a Christian of over fifty years standing, and a member also of the ruling assembly in London, sympathized with the ex-clergyman, went down and had fellowship with the new meeting, and wrote to the *leader* of the ruling meeting reminding him of the watchword alluded to, which he had given, and claiming his approval. But the leader (of whom I shall have more to say on a future occasion) had no idea of his precept being thus applied, and issued a circular condemning Dr. C—— for his “enormous self-sufficiency,” describing his conduct as “clandestine,” “untruthful,” “dishonest,” and “profane;” in short applied such language to the man with whom he had been all these years in the closest

fellowship as might be supposed to describe a *felon*. Acting upon the judgment of the case thus expressed, the ruling meeting, of which he had hitherto been a member, put Dr. C—— out of fellowship, and at the same time all assemblies that received him. The text used to extinguish their aged brother being Eph. iv. 4. "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." The principle thereby laid down appears to be, that however evil the condition of one of *their* assemblies, and however long that evil might remain unjudged, the sin of spreading a new table is one not to be tolerated.

E.—How came you to be acquainted with these circumstances; surely you must be exaggerating?

B.—It is one of the inconveniences of this form of Church government that the printer has to be called in, in order to provide a sufficient number of copies of its decrees. The whole of these facts have been gathered from the papers issued by them that have come into my hands.

E.—But how can Christian people believe in and submit to such an unscriptural course of discipline?

B.—Don't you know that we are capable of believing anything if the Lord allows us to carry out our own wills. Turn to 2 Sam. xvii. 13. Hushai the Archite, when asked for his counsel in the capture of David, says, "Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river until there be not one small stone found there." For my part I can never read that verse without a smile, as I look at the picture

Hushai drew of all Israel laying hold of ropes strong enough to haul from their foundations the houses, and sweeping the inhabitants like so many ants into the river ; but it was all gravely accepted, for we read that they judged the counsel of Hushai to be better than that of Ahithophel.

Before closing the subject of Discipline, I want to show you from the Word how far a severer course of dealing than that which God enjoins shows a condition of heart out of communion with Him. When Nathan related to David the story of the rich man having robbed the poor one of his ewe lamb, the king's anger was kindled. According to the law of Moses he was justified in commanding a fourfold restitution, but he proceeds to pass *sentence of death* on the rich man, *as well as to exact* the fourfold restoration of the lamb, and David was never further from God than he was at that moment. It matters not whether the evil we would crush be great or small, if we do not God's work in God's way the remedy may prove a greater evil than the disease, as one of their own teachers has said, (C. H. M.'s "Notes on Genesis," p. 208): "We may lay down the following principle, viz., Whenever devotedness passes beyond divinely appointed bounds it is suspicious."

Discipline is a very solemn thing, especially as it has to be exercised by those who are themselves kept each moment from falling by a power not their own. The unsparing principle that makes every want of subjection a capital offence is far easier than the scriptural course which (with all failure) it is our desire to follow, but do not let us think the former more pleasing to God than the laxest discipline exist-

ing among any who call themselves Christians. He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, *even they both* are abomination to the Lord. (Prov. xvii, 15.) It is a great thing to ascertain what the condition of things actually is before attempting to pass a judgment upon it, and very important to lay hold of the plain facts that Scripture brings before us, and not allow a theory to displace those facts. .

Take, for instance, the Epistles to the Seven Churches. What are the *facts* brought before us in these messages from the throne? Not a seven-branched candlestick, but seven candlesticks in the midst of which the Saviour walked. All these Churches symbolized by the candlesticks existed *at the same time* and *in the same country*, within an area not larger than that of this island. Laodicea is twice mentioned in epistles written long before the Revelation. Surely if the "one body on divine ground" was to be manifested anywhere as a remedy for impurity and unfaithfulness, that existed in neighbouring assemblies, the Spirit would have said so to these Churches. But what do we find in every case? Each Church made individually responsible to the Risen Christ in matters of walk and doctrine. *Removing the candlestick out of its place* was HIS act when that responsibility was ignored.

How do our Exclusive brethren interpret these weighty messages? *Invariably* as a chronological history of the Church. Ephesus representing it in the Apostles' days. Laodicea in our own. I do not deny that there is a prophetic aspect of this portion of the Word, but when my grasp of that aspect prevents my laying hold of the *facts* of the case, I do well to

remind myself of the words: "Full well ye reject the commandment of the Lord that ye may keep your own tradition."

E.—What was the origin of the Exclusive Brethren?

B.—I must reserve my reply for a future occasion. Division among the Lord's children is always a sorrowful subject to enter upon, but it is needful for us to be informed about many things which make us sad. Though "Bethesda" was not one of the parties in the original strife, yet the course taken by this Church brought upon her an overwhelming measure of reproach, the details of which form an eventful chapter in her history.

The Family Sorrow.

E.—You promised to tell me something of the origin of the “Exclusives,” and connected it with sorrow in the past history of Bethesda. I have heard this much, that something or other said or done by the elders of this Church, some six-and-thirty years ago, caused a division among brethren, and I gather from what you told me, that difference of judgment on Church order and discipline was the occasion of it.

B.—So it appears to many ; but I plainly see that the wide difference of judgment on the subject of discipline, had its rise in entirely distinct views of the little word “Church,” and I hinted as much in what I said. It is now nearly sixty years ago since a few believers, coming together to read the Word of God, saw that it was their privilege as disciples of Christ to break bread in remembrance of Him. The principles in connection with worship and ministry, which have already been laid before you as those held among ourselves, were very much the result of constant prayerful study of the Word in those days. The first meetings of these believers were held in Dublin, but subsequently Plymouth became the spot

where the leading brethren were found, and whence most of their earlier publications were sent forth. But Mr. Müller and Mr. Craik, at Teignmouth, had commenced the weekly breaking of bread, connected with an open ministry, more than three months before anything of the kind was known in Plymouth, and while Mr. Darby, the subsequent leader of the Exclusives, was preaching in the pulpits of the Church of England.

E.—Who was Mr. Darby?

B.—He was born at Westminster, and received his early education in the celebrated school there; but his ancestral home was Leap Castle, Roscrea, Ireland; and he studied for the bar in Dublin University. He entered the ministry of the Established Church on his conversion, and was ordained both deacon and priest. For seven years he continued searching the Scriptures, and preaching Christ from cabin to cabin among the Wicklow mountains, to the poorest of the poor. He early joined the little company of "Brethren" who first met in Dublin. My father, Mr. A. N. Groves, afterwards missionary in Persia and India, and Mr. Bellet, who have long since fallen asleep, were of the original number, also Dr. Cronin, who has lately passed away. Mr. Darby left the surplice and the prayer-book behind him, but he always adhered to Infant Baptism; nor could he altogether divest himself of his clerical prestige. He possessed a *personal influence*, of which no one can form an idea who has never been personally acquainted with him. I mean the power of attracting those who saw and heard him, and of carrying their

judgment in spite of themselves: in this he has had, perhaps, no rival. His writings are often obscure, and we need his interpreter, Mr. Kelly, to explain them to us; but the testimony of those who knew him intimately in former years, is that his power of imparting his own thoughts to others in conversation, was wonderful. Just as a skilful musician can delight us with a few notes by the way he strikes the chords, and a real artist bring before us exactly what he wants us to see, by a few strokes of his pencil, so Mr. Darby reached many, and did much, enforcing the stamp of his teaching in words and looks not easily forgotten.

Unembarrassed by any family ties or other circumstances, possessing a good constitution, ample means, and untiring energy, he turned these gifts to the best account. Leaving Ireland, he travelled incessantly over England. Wherever a few believers were gathered as "Brethren," he remained a while, and instructed them in the things of God, and was also used in very many cases of conversion. When he had somewhat established the meetings, he moved on to a fresh sphere. After labouring for a time in England he went over to France, and thence to Germany. His labours were greatly blessed in both countries, and many assemblies were formed. Hence it will not be difficult to understand that, at the end of ten or fifteen years from the commencement of his ministry, he was personally known to and loved by a far larger number of believers than was any other of the ministering brethren.

In the meantime, the work was rapidly progressing in England—more especially at Plymouth, where

nearly a thousand persons were in fellowship at one time. At this meeting the most prominent and gifted man was Mr. B. W. Newton. He had taken his degree at college with a view to ordination, but had abandoned the idea when he saw the Holy Spirit to be the only one who can call and qualify for the work of the ministry. As a teacher and expounder of the Word he was greatly valued, and notes of his discourses were habitually made and circulated by several in the meeting.

About the year 1845, Mr. Darby was greatly dissatisfied on hearing accounts of the influence Mr. Newton had gained in Plymouth, and suddenly returning there, took up a hostile position against him. Mr. G. V. Wigram, from London, came to aid him in his purpose of breaking up the assembly. "Clericalism" was the principal charge brought against Mr. Newton at that time, but differing prophetic views had much to do with the conflict. On the last Sunday of that year Mr. Darby spread a fresh table in Plymouth—not on the ground of any heresy or immorality, but on account of the incompatibility of their views. This, then, may be reckoned as the birthday of Exclusivism.

E.—Can you give me in a few words the difference of the views on prophecy that were held by these two teachers?

B.—We have not touched on the subject hitherto, but I ought to have let you know ere this, that there was no testimony for which the brethren were more distinguished than that of the personal return of our Lord as the hope of his people, and the grand means

of separating them from the course of this world. Most held that no event was to interpose itself between this coming and the eye of faith. The rapture of the saints—the meeting of the Lord in the air (1 Thess. iv. 17) was the very next thing to be looked for. Then, apart from this earth, was to be held the judgment seat of Christ, where everyone who has been faithful receives his reward. (1 Cor. iv. 5.) Meanwhile, the salt of the righteous having been removed, corruption hastens, Antichrist appears, the great tribulation takes place, and the *day of the Lord* is ushered in by His appearance with ten thousands of His saints on the scene. Antichrist and his followers are destroyed, and the millennial period commences.

Mr. B. W. Newton maintained that the Church would not be removed till after Antichrist had been manifested, and consequently, that the man of sin, and the great tribulation, lie between us and that coming for which each saint was taught by the former to watch. It is well known that Mr. Müller, and other leading brethren among us, thus interpret prophecy, and since it was put forth, numbers of brethren have adopted it.

E.—Which of these commends itself to you as the Truth?

B.—The former, and for this simple reason: that *I am told to watch* for my Lord and be ready for Him; whereas, if His enemy must come first, the joy is gone out of my blessed hope, and I learn to desire to go to my grave in peace, that my eyes may not behold the evil that shall come upon my people.

E.—Whose side did Mr. Müller and Mr. Craik take

when the Brethren at Plymouth were thus divided by Mr. Darby?

B.—They had been already fourteen years labouring in Bristol. Hundreds of believers had been added to the Church, and their multiplied labours for the Lord did not give them the leisure, that was found by others, to enter into the controversy, but they continued to receive Christians both from those who held with Mr. Newton, and those who held with Mr. Darby.

It was far otherwise at Plymouth itself, and scores of places where Brethren's meetings existed. Most of the leading teachers were men who possessed more or less of means, and ample time for engaging in the conflict; the sisters too were fully as zealous, many of them deep students of the Word. Neither would have excluded a member of the opposite side from communion, but Mr. N. was watched narrowly by the seceders from that day forward.

By-and-by, Mr. N., in an exposition of the Psalms, prophetic of our Lord's humiliation and sufferings, made statements which were taken down by a sister who was present, and widely circulated. These notes do not appear to have been submitted to the speaker for correction, so that Mr. Newton cannot be held responsible for all they contained. The late Mr. Harris, of Plymstock, severely condemned what he found in them, and upon the evidence of these notes Mr. Newton was charged with teaching error similar to that which Edward Irving put forth, by placing our Lord, as descended from Adam, under "*sentence of death*"—otherwise than as bearing sin for us—and that His body was necessarily mortal. This was not

stated in so many words, but the subject was treated of (we are told) so as to lead the reader to these conclusions.

At this point, I must give you clearly to understand that, in speaking hereafter of Mr. Newton's "doctrine," "error," and "heresy," I do not use these terms as the personal judgment of one who has had "knowledge of all things from the very first," but to express that which for nearly forty years I have understood by such terms. I have not read a tithe of the controversial tracts of this period, and I deem their study withering and unprofitable to the last degree. As the commander of a fort, in giving ten reasons for not firing a salute, began by saying he had no powder, and so was excused from mentioning the remaining nine; I can state one objection to such an occupation which will relieve me from the duty of stating more.

Little was thought of teaching in those days that was not "*deep*," and I can clearly remember how the interest in any discussion on Scripture was *increased* among our elders when they saw how completely the subject was beyond the comprehension of the servants and children. Some of our parents would have felt that truth presented in language that *these* could understand, was nothing less than an affront to themselves.

Mr. Newton may have been in heart sound all along, but he so *taught*, that fellow-teachers in other places, who loved and honoured him—men as competent to understand English as himself—after hours and days spent in studying his tracts, came to the conclusion that "error" and "heresy" were to be

found in them. We therefore believe that Mr. N. did an injury to the Lord's people, though he wist it not, and we know he has suffered terribly in consequence.*

Being already estranged, those who brought the charge were not able to deal in loving remonstace with the erring teacher, but from the beginning assailed him as a heretic—dishonouring the Person of the Lord.

Not only was Mr. Newton now excommunicated by Mr. Darby and his party, but all who came from his meeting, whether they understood the matter or not, and all who were known to be his personal friends were likewise excluded. This course was speedily adopted by many meetings, which were in sympathy with Mr. Darby, to show their abhorrence of the evil doctrine.

It must not be supposed that the Brethren in Bristol "cared for none of these things." It was a source of real anxiety and alarm to Mr. Müller and Mr. Craik, but while they rejected Mr. Newton's latest teachings, they could not sanction Mr. Darby's actings. Greater care had to be taken in receiving into fellowship those who came from Plymouth; but they could not find warrant from Scripture for excluding friends of Mr. Newton from the Lord's table, when they did not hold the evil doctrine, and denied that Mr. Newton did so. Neither could they refuse fellowship with such Christians as came from his meeting, who on examination proved to be ignorant about the whole thing. Their earnest desire for the welfare of the Church at Bethesda led to their keeping the members as far as they could from entering into the strife, as it was only too

evident that it paralyzed for the time being all gospel work.

No breach had yet taken place with Mr. Darby. He called upon Mr. Müller, in Bristol, about 20th April, 1848, and was asked by him to preach on the following Sunday evening at Bethesda. This he excused himself from doing on the ground of having a previous engagement to do so at Taunton. Shortly after this, Mr. Darby intimated to a large meeting of labouring brethren in Exeter, that he could no longer go to Bethesda, because two friends of Mr. Newton had been received there. He was asked if he had intimated this to Mr. Müller. He had not, but proceeded to do so by letter, and thus closed the fellowship which for many years had been maintained between them.

Of course, in such a large meeting as Bristol, there were some who held with Mr. Darby, that the peril of the situation was great, and all sorts of evil *might* come in if extreme measures were not taken to maintain the purity of the faith. One of these, a Mr. Alexander, continued to press the matter upon the Friday meeting, demanding a Church investigation and a Church condemnation of Mr. Newton's errors. This was withstood by the Brethren, and their reasons for doing so found expression in a paper which was read to the Church with full explanation of the various points laid down. This paper has since been designated *The Letter of the Ten*. The introduction set forth the truth concerning our Lord's person, as held and taught in Bethesda, in opposition to the error assigned to Mr. Newton, with all the clearness the most exclusive brother could desire. It then stated that if error was taught elsewhere we are not bound

as a body to investigate it. It set forth in the next place that the variableness in Mr. Newton's teachings of late, their ambiguity, and the fact that Christian men of unblemished reputation for soundness of faith were not agreed as to the amount of error they contained, made it very undesirable to call the whole Church to decide upon what but a few could understand. It was further stated that some who came from Mr. Newton's meeting denied that he held what he was charged with holding, and if these persons were themselves sound in the faith they could not be refused on scriptural grounds. The requirement of Mr. Alexander seemed to some like a *fresh test of communion*. It further added that the controversy had been so carried on hitherto as to cause the truth to be evil spoken of; the greater number of believers in Bethesda were as yet in happy ignorance of it, and "the beginning of strife is as the letting out of water." At the same time, it was distinctly to be understood that it was sought to maintain fellowship with all believers, and "we consider ourselves as particularly associated with those that meet as we do, simply in the name of the Lord Jesus." The explanations given at the time the letter was read at the Church meeting, made all present clearly to understand that there was no desire to ignore the danger, but that the Scriptural way of meeting it was to give double diligence and caution in receiving into fellowship, and not in calling the Church together to instruct them in the details of the error.

Mr. L. Hill states, moreover, that Mr. Newton, at the earnest entreaty of Messrs. Müller and Craik, had consented to reconsider the erroneous tracts, and

action was postponed till the result should be known.

But when this document fell into the hands of those whose minds were full of suspicion and misgiving about Bethesda, it was read without any of these explanations, and Bethesda was looked upon as a sort of city of refuge for error. Mr. Darby came again to Bristol shortly after it was written, and urged Mr. Müller and Mr. Craik to withdraw it, threatening to separate from them all those believers in other places with whom for years they had held Christian fellowship; but they had acted in the sight of God according to the wisdom given them, and would not yield.

Mr. Darby immediately started off on his travels to fulfil his word. On reaching Leeds, Aug. 26th, 1848, he issued a lithographic circular as follows: "I should neither go to Bethesda in its present state, nor while in that state go where persons from it were willingly admitted, for this involves the whole question of association with Brethren." He continues in the same document to charge Bethesda with diligently seeking to extenuate and palliate Mr. Newton's doctrines, with admitting persons holding them, and lastly with *formally* and *deliberately admitting these doctrines.*" The effect of this circular on the many meetings where Mr. Darby was known and loved, his words and writings treasured, and his hymns constantly sung, was just this: Can it be that a man so taught of the Spirit of God, whose word in the conversion of souls has been so established, whose ministry has brought so many of us from the bondage of tradition into the liberty of the gospel—is it

possible that his word is not to be received as to *matters of fact*?

And here I pause and ask you to turn to the Word of God for a solution of this difficult problem. There lived once a man called Eliphaz, the Temanite, whose mind was richly stored with the truth of God. It was he who first said "Happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty," which is quoted in Heb. xii. 5, 6, as the words of God. It was from his lips the words fell, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness," which Paul quotes in 1 Cor. iii. 19, as Scripture. Now this eminent teacher desired to convince his friend Job that God's dealings with him were on account of his sins, but failed entirely to alter Job's contrary opinion. At last Eliphaz lost his temper, and made the following statement (Job. xxii. 6, 7, 9): (1stly.) Thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought. (2ndly.) Stripped the naked of their clothing. (3rdly.) Thou hast given no water to the weary to drink. (4thly.) Thou has withholden bread from the hungry. (5thly.) Thou hast sent widows away empty. (6thly.) The arms of the fatherless have been broken. Six falsehoods as to *matters of fact* in the compass of three verses because they were necessary in the accuser's judgment to account for Job's woeful circumstances. Had we been present at the moment Eliphaz laid these things to Job's charge, and been as attached to the Temanite as hundreds were to Mr. Darby, we should not have hesitated in believing and declaring that we "knew all about" why Job was suffering at the hand of God.

It is difficult for us now to form an idea of the

excitement among Brethren all over England which followed, and the searchings of heart in Bristol especially. It could not much longer be said that the greater number of those in fellowship at Bethesda were ignorant of the "Question;" for their interest was roused to make inquiry by "The letter of the Ten," and tracts, freely circulated among them by those who held with Mr. Darby, quite changed the condition of things before six months had elapsed.

About this time Mr. Newton published a tract containing the erroneous doctrine in clearer language than that which he had been wont to use. These considerations led Mr. Müller and Mr. Craik, with the leading Brethren in Bristol, to bring the subject before the Church, which six months before they judged it desirable to refrain from doing. Seven special Church meetings were held, commencing Nov. 27th, and ending Dec. 11th, 1848. With patient care the whole matter was laid before the Church, and sixteen other Brethren, besides those named, took part in the discussion that followed. The result arrived at was, "That no one defending, maintaining, or upholding Mr. Newton's views or tracts should be received into communion" (*i.e.*, those which had been considered).

During the following summer, Mr. Darby called on Mr. Müller, at Orphan House No. 1, at ten minutes to one. The following is Mr. Müller's account of what took place: Mr. D. said, "As you have now judged the tracts, the reason why we should not be united no longer exists." To this Mr. M. replied, "I have only ten minutes now free, having an engagement at one o'clock, and therefore I cannot *now*

enter on this subject ; for you have acted so wickedly in this whole affair, that many things have to be looked into before we could be really united again." On this Mr. Darby rose and left, and thus ended their last interview. He had grievously slandered the man, to whom he had been speaking, and his fellows before all the Lord's people, but he never acknowledged to committing a fault, or drew back from any course he had once begun.

It might have been supposed that the " Evil having been judged," (to use the current expression of the time), fellowship with Bethesda would have been resumed by those who had lately kept aloof. But this was not the case. To the minds of hundreds the matter had been put thus :—" Fellowship with Mr. Darby means upholding the honour of the Lord ; fellowship with ' Bethesda ' means indifference to His honour." The black character given to this Church and her pastors by Mr. D., remained unrecalled, and so their judgment of the evil was received with grave suspicion. (A book recently published by one of the leading Exclusives, referring to that judgment, explains it to mean that anyone was at liberty to *hold* the error, so long as he did not *teach* it). A new test or pledge of sincerity was demanded by the Exclusives, even the putting out of those who were sound in the faith and blameless in walk, if these had or held at any time fellowship with Mr. Newton. For this the Word gave no warrant, and it was stedfastly refused.

Mr. Wigram then came to Bristol, and sought to do what Mr. Darby had so successfully done in Plymouth—to divide the assembly. He made the bold

assertion that the very fact of any believer not seeing the matter in the light in which he represented it—*proved* such an one to be under a delusion of Satan.

Numbers of devoted Christians found themselves suddenly entangled by this new discipline, yet they durst not resist it, lest they should fall under the charge of being “indifferent to the Lord’s honour.” As time passed on, everything they heard of blessing in connection with George Müller’s work or Henry Craik’s ministry made them uneasy and look out of the window ; but any evil concerning them or the state of the assembly roused lively interest. It was a positive balm to the troubled conscience—a cup of consolation to be passed from one to another, which never became exhausted, or, in other words, lost nothing in the telling. Where a demand of this kind exists, Satan is always ready with a supply, and on one occasion a report was circulated which drew forth much self-congratulation among the Exclusive gatherings, and which was exactly what their leaders had foretold. It was that *Mr. Craik himself had become tainted with the heresy!* The story is so instructive that I must tell it briefly, as it is a fair sample of much that took place at that time and since.

It seems that some, in their recoil from Mr. Newton’s error, taught that our Lord’s body was of purely heavenly origin, having only the *appearance* and *similitude* of humanity. A poor woman, being troubled in mind about this, asked Mr. Craik. He brought Scripture to prove the unsoundness of this, and spoke to this effect: “Remember, our Lord became a real man, His body flesh and blood, as truly

as this (grasping her arm) is flesh and blood." The good woman, reassured, told a neighbour what passed between herself and Mr. C. on the subject: "He told me that our Lord had flesh and blood the same as mine." She thought she had given his exact words; and yet what Mr. C. said was scriptural, while her version of it was an error, because *her* flesh was sinful, and contained the seed of corruption. She was asked to repeat the conversation, and the false doctrine was detected at once, and conveyed to those who craved this material to strengthen the position they were pledged to defend. You can see from this little incident how, on this sacred subject, truth and error are divided by so narrow a line that the brethren of Bethesda shrank from bringing the controversy before the Church, as long as it could be prevented. Yet Mr. Alexander urged them to do so, because he said, "The Church has judged it." "And what is the Church?" asked Mr. Müller. The answer given was: "Those who meet as we do." "That is not my view of the Church," rejoined Mr. Müller; and Mr Meredith, who was present, further remarked, "I should consider holding such a view of the Church as going back to Popery."

Quite apart from the incident above related, Mr. Wigram, in searching for evidence against Mr. Craik, came upon some pastoral letters published many years before; the orthodoxy of which had never been called in question. From one of these a cruelly false charge against him was constructed and published. When Mr. C. remonstrated on the unrighteousness of such a course, without first making enquiries as to its truthfulness, Mr. Wigram replied that it would have

been neither *common sense*, *common honesty*, nor *common grace*, to have asked him a single question on the matter, because being under Satanic delusion it would only have caused him to multiply lies !!

Mr. Craik was a man of so tender a spirit that the very sight of suffering often brought tears to his eyes, so you can imagine what he had to endure in those days !

E.—Can that be the same Mr. G. V. Wigram who spent a fortune in bringing out the Englishman's Hebrew and Greek Concordances of the Bible—works that are quite as wonderful for their accuracy as for the labour they must have cost ?

B.—It is even so. I have no difficulty, however, in explaining the mystery. It is a well-established fact that in times of excitement—spiritual or temporal—when the mind is day and night running in a single groove, undiverted by having to work for the support of the body—reason runs off the line ; imagination takes the place of evidence, and the more preposterous a conclusion the more intensely is it held. At the same time no change takes place in the ability of the same mind to deal rightly with other matters.

Ten years before this, Mr. Wigram wrote as follows: "How are meetings for communion of saints in these parts to be regulated? Would it be for the glory of the Lord, and the increase of testimony to have *one central meeting*, the common responsibility of all within reach, and as many meetings subordinate to it as grace might vouchsafe? or to hold it to be better to allow the meetings to grow up as they

may without connection and dependent on the energy of individuals only? I think I have no judgment in the matter, save that our service ought to be intelligent, and whatever is done to be done wittingly."

These distinct principles, full of the most weighty consequences, were then trembling in the balance in the writer's mind. When the first division took place at Plymouth the balance was struck in favour of the former. When the second controversy began it had been accepted by many assemblies, and when Bethesda was condemned, it became the prominent and distinguishing feature of those who cast her out of fellowship. One of the first things each convert was instructed in, being "The Unity of the Body." "Divine ground" being its familiar designation.

When the division was fully accomplished, Mr. Darby returned once more to the Continent, not only teaching and preaching those things which were put forth by Brethren from the beginning, but whenever an assembly was formed for breaking of bread it was forthwith placed on "Divine ground." As Mr. Müller's work, in connection with the Orphan Houses, was widely known, and his "narrative" revealed a close resemblance in doctrine to those things Mr. Darby himself taught, it was naturally presumed by these continental converts (some of whom were fresh from Popish influence) that they were in close fellowship. If the facts of the case had been explained to them they would have been lost in bewilderment at the reason Mr. Darby could give for putting Mr. Müller out among the "wicked persons" who were to be dealt with in discipline. It became necessary for him to repeat and constantly to add to

the charges he had formerly made, many and grievous things he was not able to prove. Nor was this all, for if any meeting was gathered for breaking of bread by those who knew nothing of real walking with God or discipline of any kind, and where disorder or false teaching prevailed, it has always been pointed out to inquirers as a "Bethesda gathering."

From the time they were cast out by the "one body" on "Divine ground," George Müller and Henry Craik "continued in their paths of service in Bristol, bearing multiplied reproach, and having their hearts unspeakably saddened by the knowledge that hundreds of sincere fellow-saints were taught to believe, and in turn taught their children in the faith to believe, all manner of evil against them. Many companies of brethren also shared their reproach, from some of which pamphlets were issued in their defence: but they *held their peace*. The pastors of Bethesda found their instructions in 1 Pet. ii. 21 and 23: "For even hereunto were we called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in His steps Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously."

E.—Do you not think, however, that it was due to many who fully believed that they *had* acted in the fear of the Lord, that Mr. Müller and Mr. Craik should have published a simple statement of facts, and the reasons for the course that was taken? Many contend that they should have done this.

B.—Mr. Müller spent hundreds of hours in going

over the whole matter personally with such as came to enquire about it. Some of these had known him and Mr. Craik for many years—had lived under his roof, and been helped by him in time of need. Although most of these left, expressing themselves as fully convinced, it constantly happened that in one week under Mr. Darby's personal influence, or where his adherents brought pressure to bear upon them, all their convictions were scattered to the winds. One of these miserable men fell into great darkness of soul as he drew near the end of his course, many years afterwards, and wrote, asking of Mr. Müller an interest in his prayers. He was told that no true restoration could take place till confession had been made of the falsehood that had coloured his life. This, however, he could not do, knowing full well that the climax of his misery would be reached by his having to die an outcast from "Divine ground."

Remembering how "The Letter of the Ten" had been printed without their leave, published without their explanations, and finally construed to mean exactly what it did not say, how could George Müller and Henry Craik, in their untold distress, judge otherwise than that their strength was to sit still?

Hitherto the whole subject has been brought before you as viewed from *without*, but you cannot faithfully describe a house if you have not been in it, and though the narrative of my personal experience is a humbling history, it will enable you to understand what the *attractive power* of Exclusivism is.

E.—Have you indeed been among the Exclusives?

B.—Yes, and I will tell you how it came about. The division took place while I was yet a boy at school. My early training was with relatives who all along have been closely linked with Mr. Darby, though my parents belonged to Bethesda. I heard little enough of the detail of the controversy before I left England in 1853, but my sympathies were altogether with Bristol, and so continued till my return in 1861. I had then confessed Christ some years, and being only for a time in this country, I did not consider myself attached to any body of Christians, but attended various places of worship, going to hear any minister whom I heard well spoken of. Though a child of God, I was intent on pleasing myself, and reaped a full harvest of disappointment. After a time I accepted an invitation to the former home of my childhood, and thus had an opportunity of observing Exclusives and their meetings, though of course I did not break bread. There were still not a few left in the meeting whom I remembered long before, and I was presently struck with the *care* they bestowed on such as were brought into their midst. One person would find him a comfortable seat; another perhaps hand him a bible; a third would call for him to take him to a meeting; a fourth would lend him one or more books as especially suitable; a fifth would aid and counsel in matters of business; a sixth would write on his behalf to another meeting in some distant city, if he was going there, so that he should not be neglected or forgotten. In fact, instead of telling such an one to make himself at home, *they made a home* for each one that was added to their number, with such loving and constant forethought in little

things, that I was charmed, and my heart made captive. On enquiry, I found that the largeness of a meeting in no way interfered with the exercise of this lovely care, for there were always half a dozen or more members offering to look after the new arrival. Not only men-pastors, but women-pastors, and even child-pastors were to be found in some way engaged on behalf of those added to the flock. It was no temporary attention either, but one that grew and increased, especially in times of sickness and sorrow.

Another striking feature in the meeting was the interest felt by all in the ministry of the Word, and a care, similar to that I have described, towards those engaged in it. It was sure to be made matter of conversation with the speaker; questions asked; further light from the Word mutually sought. Sometimes an aged Priscilla would teach a young evangelist "the way of God more perfectly," and his heart was sure to be cheered by the acknowledgment of blessing when it *was* received; and, however weak or inferior in gifts such an one might be, he was never deserted by the believers in the assembly for the most attractive preaching to be found elsewhere. The deep interest felt in the one who ministered the Word was a marvellous help to him, as seen in the rapidity of the progress he made in power for service.

Another thing that I noticed was the number of books, large and small, that had been written by these brethren. Not on a few topics, but embracing, as it appeared to me, the whole range of Scripture, and their conversations on the Word of God made me feel how ignorant I was in matters where I had thought I knew all that the Bible had to say. I was

eager to know more, and Mr. Kelly's "Six lectures on the Church of God" was put into my hands. The ruin of professing Christendom, the refuge in the promise, "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them." The oneness of all the assemblies that made Christ their centre, resulting in the restoration of that unity that had so long been lost. The presence of the Holy Ghost, the guarantee that the Unity would continue. The prophetic interpretation of the Epistles to the seven Churches, including themselves with Philadelphia, and, lastly, the discipline that was necessary to maintain the purity of "the Church of God." All this I drank in simply as "*Precious truth.*" The fact of there being now *a visible manifestation* of what Christ desired His Church to be, owning His Word alone as the rule of life, and the Holy Ghost alone as their directing and controlling power, and therefore nearest of all Christians to the Person of the Lord whom they delighted to honour,—seemed to dawn upon me, and I was about to find rest for the sole of my foot. Well, the next step, in order to partake of the privilege of association with "the little flock," was to "*judge the Question,*" as they call it. And here I may remark that the term "judging the Question," like the familiar expression "cutting one's teeth," is not to be taken literally. Our teeth *cut us* to tell the truth, and so when I sat down with a pile of pamphlets on the table to "judge the Question," I found the question was judged already, and my business was to accept that judgment.

Among the names I had always been accustomed to revere in past years was that of Mr. George

V. Wigram. His comments on the "letter of the Ten" were something terrible, and when I had perused them and other grievous declarations concerning Mr. Müller and Mr. Craik, I asked, "How have they met these charges?" "They have not met them at all was the reply." "What! all these years have they not answered one of their accusers?" "No! they evidently could not refute them, and were therefore silent,—make any enquiry you please." I was not inclined to do this; indeed, I only wanted something to justify me in taking my place where my heart was already, and this *silence*, was it not proof enough of guilty indifference to the Lord's honour?

Of course my friends and relatives in Bristol would be grieved by my taking this step, but I began to look on this as bearing reproach for Christ, and rather hailed it than shrank from it in my new found joy. After some months spent in England, during which I availed myself of every opportunity of attending the ministry and reading the works of the Brethren whom I had joined, I returned to India, and had full leisure for testing the position I had taken in a path of isolation. The discipline I had learned to hold was, not only to avoid those whose walk was evil, and doctrine unscriptural, but equally to renounce fellowship with those whose walk was blameless and doctrine pure, if these transgressed in holding such fellowship. Still I counted it a privilege to belong to this chosen company, and bear testimony concerning "true Church ground," though I found no Christian from the beginning to the end of the year whom I could break bread with.

I had one brother like-minded it is true, but his work lay 300 miles away, and we agreed to issue a quarterly publication to set forth the truth we had received. Meanwhile, I became conscious of serious spiritual indisposition. Of course, true hearted servants of Christ knowing my views and that they were outside my fellowship, were little disposed to hear what I had to say, and any remark made by them on the Word of God was so received, and taken exception to by me, if it did not square with "Church truth," that conversation soon ceased, being always of a controversial kind.

Then my own reading of the Word of God became a trial, because, instead of being able to allow it to act directly on my conscience when it told me to receive the Lord's people for His sake and as Himself, I was constrained to set its precepts aside when they interfered with my "testimony." As this was the case, I dreaded intimacy with every brother in the Lord who might come to my house, lest he might propose fellowship, and I should have to decline it. I preferred to show hospitality to the world or to Christians who rarely break bread, as it saved me from these dreaded explanations. You may imagine how I hailed a visit from my partner in this "testimony," who had worked with me at the little quarterly I referred to. This took place two years later. I poured into his ear the trial connected with our testimony, and to my astonishment found that he had been breaking bread with one who laughed to scorn our discipline; and with others, who not only had been to Bethesda, but would be glad enough to find themselves there again! "Oh," said he, "it is different

here from what it is at home. If I am persuaded that those who break bread are Christians, walking uprightly, I ask no questions." "But," I rejoined, "if C—— or G—— were to come to any meeting in England where you were one of the responsible brethren, would you not have been bound to ask them whether they were on 'Divine ground'; and is the Lord's table in India to be less jealously guarded than at home?" The reply he gave I forget, but it did not satisfy my conscience. He had done that which would have put him out of fellowship in England, and I had to put *him* under discipline, so to speak, or, in other words, give up my cherished hope of once more breaking bread!

I never rejoiced in my position after that. I had an undefined sense of something being wrong, and though I was kept up by loving and encouraging letters from my Exclusive friends at home, who justified my course throughout, I felt that they had never tested the position as I had. Constant fellowship, and other means of grace maintained them in spiritual health spite of their discipline. With me, on the contrary, it was all discipline and no fellowship. It is all very well for some people to say, "That their pipe is meat and drink to them," but let them have really to subsist on smoke and they will tell another tale. And I was to be made more wretched still. I had been nearly four years an Exclusive when I had residing under my own roof an aged relative, whose mellow Christian character and constant prayerful habits, made her face to shine as it told of the communion she enjoyed with her Lord. She had formerly resided in Bristol, and, though never connected with Bethesda,

had a deep regard for dear Mr. Müller and Mr. Craik. I valued her counsel in matters of business, I envied her enjoyment of the Word, and I positively groaned in spirit at the responsibility I was under not to break bread with her. When the subject was touched upon, and I referred to the silent acknowledgment of all the evil that had been laid to their charge, she just calmly referred to Matt. xviii. 15, "Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." "Have you done this," she added. "May there not be reasons for their silence, which you consider so guilty, that would quite satisfy your conscience? Is it according to the mind of Christ that, having such opportunities as you had for a personal interview (being connected with them), you never allowed them one word of explanation?"

Once I might have found a ready excuse, but I could not now. For some time I had been restless and unhappy, I now felt "*verily guilty*" as well. Still I clung to my position, though grown indifferent to the work of God in the hands of others, and losing all interest in surrounding missionary labour. I yet held a meeting, where I endeavoured to expound the Word from week to week. On one of these occasions I was asked at its close, to visit an engineer employed on the works I superintended, who was prostrate with fever, and under great concern of soul. I went, and took a chair by the side of the sick man, who turned his eyes enquiringly on me. There I sat for a full quarter of an hour, earnestly endeavouring to find some word to say, but my lips were sealed as truly as if I had been born dumb. A horror came over me, and I asked myself, "What am I coming

to?" I felt petrified. I seized my hat and rushed home in a distracted state of mind, and falling on my knees, asked the Lord to show me whether there was anything in *me* that had brought me to this pass. I do not remember how long I was in prayer, but the answer was not long withheld. I HAD EXALTED A MISTAKEN INFERENCE FROM THE WORD INTO THE SAME AUTHORITY AS THE WORD ITSELF. I had been acting in discipline where God gave me no authority, and thus had made other portions of the Word completely void. The scales fell from my eyes all at once, and never for one single moment during all the years that have since passed have I been obscured by any misgiving about it. I went sadly to the sick man's bed the following morning, read to him the ninth of John, and asked the Lord to give him the same power to believe that was granted to the blind man. The reaction, however, that followed that night's struggle was terrible. The wall surrounding my castle had suddenly sunk, how could I feel secure in occupying the citadel any longer. My place in the "little flock," "the Philadelphian church that kept the Lord's Word and did not deny His name," that I had clung to so fervently, that I smiled at any attempt to dislodge me out of it—was gone from that hour. The constant flow of sympathy and affection from those in England whom I had been one with would cease, and by them I should henceforth be reckoned as *dead*.

If a poor man should be given a document, and told to present it at the court of some distant city: he starts on his journey, endures hardship happily,

while he clasps that which was committed to him to his bosom, and at length footsore, but gladly expectant, arrives at his destination and presents his title deeds : the clerk of the court, on breaking the seals, draws forth A BLANK SHEET OF FOOLS-CAP PAPER! Picture to yourself his dismay, and if you can enter into the suitor's feelings as he compares his labour with its reward ; you can estimate the value I now put on the four years testimony to the " Holiness that becometh the House of God," which I had been taught so carefully to observe.

Closing thus my personal narrative, I return to notice the progress made by the "one body" during the fifteen years subsequent to the division.

The leading minds among them made full use of the press in circulating among all their assemblies the special doctrines they held. Their monthly publications were read by most in fellowship with them, and produced a marvellous uniformity in the general testimony and interpretation of Scripture ; a uniformity likewise in their condemnation of "Bethesda," and those who took similar ground, as the counterfeit of that of which they claimed to be the reality. About the year 1861, they laid claim to be "the one assembly of God." It does not appear who first used this startling designation, but the response it met with is clear enough, from its appearing four times in a single letter of their central meeting. In a letter written by Mr. Darby from the South of France February 19th, 1864, to a Mr. Spurr, of Sheffield, the actual position claimed for the Exclusives in general, and London in particular, is set forth in language no less presumptuous.

The meeting at Sheffield was “*put out*” for its reception of a person named Goodall, and Mr. Darby justifies the act in these words: “He is rejected in London. The assembly in London have weighed—and I with them—the case, and counted him as either excommunicated or in schism I take part in this act, and *hold him to be outside the Church of God on earth, being outside what represents it in London.* I am bound by Scripture to count him so. I come to Sheffield, there he breaks bread, and is in what? *Not in the Church of God on earth, for he is out of it in London, and there are not two churches on earth—cannot be—so as to be in one and out of the other.* It is confusion and disorder.” I ask myself: Could any one who had not been originally in “priest’s orders” have used such language? Now after recovering from your surprise in listening to these Church principles, you may be inclined to ask what had Mr. Goodall done? You shall hear. There was a Mr. Stewart, who for forcing his ministry on unwilling ears, and otherwise making himself disagreeable, had been “*put out*” by the assembly in London. The Walworth meeting asked what sin or sins, according to Scripture, of an excommunicable character had Mr. Stewart committed? They were told that his offence was of a character *not needing to be determined by Scripture.* They were not satisfied with this reply, and shortly after receiving it, removed their place of meeting to Peckham.

For this act of “self-will” the whole gathering at Peckham were put outside the Church of God on earth. Mr. Goodall happened to be a member of the excommunicated gathering, and going to Sheffield,

was received by the meeting there in spite of the ban that rested on Peckham, and so Sheffield came to be put out by the "one assembly of God." The disclosure of such proceedings to Christians in the Church of England, or among Dissenters, justly excites feelings of ridicule and contempt. It suggests itself to an ordinary mind that this cutting off of assemblies must launch them into a condition of liberty that would compensate them for thus being "*put out.*" But this is not the case. The central joy—if I may so term it—of an intelligent Exclusive is his position as a member of the "*one body.*" Cut off from that he is like a ship that has lost its compass: and the unintelligent are bound by a no less potent bond, even the fear of forfeiting the regard of those who have become as dear to them, it may be as their own souls. None but those who have gone through it can understand what it is to be regarded by once loving eyes as if you were a paving-stone: but the ordeal has broken the hearts of some, and turned the reason of others. So it generally happens that after a war of words of greater or less length, the *assemblies* that are put out humble themselves and return—though *individuals* are detached in the process. Just as a papist, who is firmly rooted in the belief that beyond the pale of his Church there is no salvation, may be shown any enormity in the lives of the Popes, or the doctrines they taught without changing colour: so you may from the undisputed writings of Mr. Darby and his party, prove deliberate falsehood—or scandalous evil-speaking, without causing a passing twinge of conscience to one who is sure of being on "Divine ground" in association with them.

E.—Excuse me—but are you not falling into the very sin of which Mr. Darby was guilty. What do you mean by *deliberate falsehood*?

B.—What would the Apostle John have said about the following? You shall be the judge. In the same letter to Mr. Spurr, from which a quotation was made, Mr. Darby goes on to say: “The evil at Bethesda is the most unprincipled admission of blasphemers against Christ: the coldest contempt for Him I ever came across. All their efforts to examine and hide it only make the matter worse. All who do not abhor the whole system, and all connection with it, are already entangled and defiled. It is, I am satisfied, *a mere net of Satan*, though many Christians may be entangled in it. Every question of Churches and unity disappears before the question of Bethesda—it is a question of Christ.”

Any comment on this would just spoil it, but it will explain the undefined horror of hundreds of godly and simple-minded believers, who know us only as thus described.

Now as to its effects. Where hundreds of assemblies were already pledged to keep aloof from “Bethesda” and all who had fellowship with her, every word of “*information*” as to its character and condition was at once used to strengthen the wall of separation. So this word of their chief circulated among the city and village gatherings, was translated into French, German, and Italian, was carried to Canada and the United States, Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand, and even to such mission fields as

Demerara* ; talked of by the way, gossiped about by the fireside, whispered in earnest controversy, spread in pamphlet form, enlarged upon in lectures and sermons, transmitted from parent to child. Do you think I over estimate the result, if I calculate that during the more than twenty years since this terrible sentence was written, the sum total of the leaves on the mightiest tree would not equal that of the unconscious offspring of this single lie.

Allusion has already been made to the mass of publications issuing [from the exclusive press. A large number of these, especially tracts setting forth the Gospel, are all that could be desired in point of clearness and truth. But in their periodicals various statements of an unscriptural character have been from time to time introduced : "sandwiched," if I may use the expression, between what is really sound and edifying, and often set in such a mass of Scriptural quotation, that it requires no little discernment to detect the "*vile*" in the "*precious*." Thirty years

* Those only who have lived among the heathen can enter into the arduous task that missionaries of the "Exclusive" type had to contend with, in explaining the nature of the SIN that made them stand aloof from brethren who went from Bristol to British Guiana, in fellowship with ourselves. The instructed negro, however, did not at all feel it necessary to *go into* detail, when enquired of by his sable brethren as to the reason of the difference. "The other party," he affirmed, "had one bad woman, called Betty Hesda, in their chapel in England, and would not turn her out!"

I have never heard this piece of "*information*" eclipsed, but by the explanation offered by an old woman forty years ago, of the strife on prophecy that originally divided brethren at Plymouth into rival camps. She told an enquiring neighbour that "Mr. Newton said as how *he* was going to be the Antichrist, and Mr. Darby would not have him!" The negro's summary of later events undoubtedly worked the greater mischief.

after Mr. Darby commenced his attack on Mr. Newton for heresy, two, who were Mr. D.'s most devoted adherents, left him for teaching in the "Bible Treasury" and "Present Testimony," similar, if not identical heresy. Mr. Dorman had been for twenty-eight years on terms of closest intimacy with Mr. Darby; and I have seen Capt. Percy Hall gaze with delight on a portrait of Mr. Darby, which he possessed, and was the only one, I think, that had ever been sketched. His protest bore the title: "*Grief upon Grief*," and in it he says, "So like are they to Mr. Newton's doctrines, that even had they not been as bad in themselves as I judge them to be, I should be quite unable to maintain the place of what is called testimony against Mr. Newton, while connected with those who hold what I think to be as bad." Mr. Dorman writes: "The Brethren have now, strange to say, completed a circle. Eighteen or nineteen years ago their polity and position were *entirely remodelled*, on the ground of separation from "Bethesda," on account of alleged laxity in dealing with false doctrine. They are now, themselves, in a position to be separated from on the score of the reception and sanction of false doctrine among themselves, and that not on some other point of Christian truth, but on the very point from which what they condemned arose."

Mr. A. Pridham, the brother who introduced me among the Exclusives, was among the number who pleaded with and urged Mr. Darby to recall what he had written, but all in vain. It is one of the most unaccountable traits in his character that he should not have cared to explain himself even to those who most earnestly sought to justify him to others. With-

outgoing into detail, I can by two short quotations put you in possession of the facts of the case that now filled with alarm these and other godly men. Twenty years ago, Mr. Darby described Mr. Newton's "heresy" thus :—" The system and principle of Mr. Newton is to present a *third kind of suffering of Christ, not vicarious, not his soul entering into the condition of those among whom he was, and whose cause he had taken up, but suffering arising from God's relation to him, and his relation to God as one of them.*" Mr. Darby's judgment on these views was that it is *the pure unmingled heresy of wrath on Christ that was not vicarious.*

Now I will give you a quotation from Mr. Darby's own writings on the "Sufferings of Christ," as unfolded in the lxxix. Psalm—twenty years later : " Thus we have along with sufferings from man at the epoch of the Crucifixion (the special object of the Psalm), bringing judgment on man, *the third character of Christ's sufferings, the suffering under the government of God. . . . Deep as the distress, it has a character wholly and entirely contrasted with atonement.*"

My own opinion is that neither Mr. Newton at first, nor Mr. Darby at this time, thought to dishonour their Lord by what they wrote, but when men of towering ability as teachers see how many hang (so to speak) on their words, the temptation to bring out something *new* is what Satan uses to force from their lips or pens something *wrong*, and "the old man" prevents its withdrawal.

Mr. Darby replied to those who remonstrated with him for teaching so similar to that of Mr. Newton, that those who could form such a comparison were

either "fools or knaves;" and he threatened to leave his party rather than retract or alter aught that he had written. This they could not allow, and the "assembly of God," in London, at once perceived that a "Church examination of the evil" would be, to use their own words, "*disastrous.*" So a letter from nine of the brethren of this assembly was sent to the brother who demanded this as follows:

"DEAR BROTHER IN THE LORD,

We have read and considered your letter to our brother, Mr. J. N. Darby, and his letter to you. We know not of any consciences so troubled, nor is there anything in the writings referred to which has affected our own consciences."

The one who first signed this *letter of the nine* was none other than G. V. Wigram, who could not contain his anger at the state of the consciences of those who had written "*the letter of the ten.*" Clearly, as one has said, it was not a question as to whether evil doctrine was taught, but "who was the teacher?"

I should like to give you an opportunity before going further of judging how far Mr. Darby is to be trusted as a teacher. He published a translation of the New Testament (sold by Fryer in Byron Place, Bristol), in the preface of which you will find something about *worship*. He says in the last page but two, "It is quite certain that in the vast majority of instances of persons coming to the Lord, they had not the least idea of owning him as God. . . . That we worship Christ who do know He is God is another matter." So far so good. But in the *translation* Mr. Darby *takes upon himself to decide* where this worship

is given, and where it is only the respectful bow of acknowledgment which we understand by doing homage. Nothing is clearer in the gospel of John than that our Lord, in declaring his Deity, was understood by the Jews ; for the reason they took up stones was, " Because that thou being a man makest Thyself God." Now, in Mr. Darby's translation of John ix., that lovely description of the process of conversion where the soul is faithful to the light it receives (verse 35): " Dost thou believe on the Son of God ?" He answered, " Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on Him ?" Jesus said, " Thou hast both seen Him and it is He that speaks with thee." And he said, " I believe, Lord " ; and he did Him homage (!!) If the Holy Spirit would teach us how the blind man received what the proud Pharisee rejected, namely, who the Lord Jesus really was ; then has Mr. Darby extinguished the fact.

There was no truth to which Mr. Darby bore a brighter testimony throughout his career than the Deity of the Son of God ; and yet he has left a work which Socinians have taken up, and claimed as evidently written by one in sympathy with themselves. If a man has travelled a road a hundred times, and yet at a critical moment tells me to turn to the right when I should go to the left, I would be slow to ask *him* again.

It is difficult to estimate the importance of the *letter of the nine* before alluded to, written, we may say, just when exclusivism had attained its majority. Their periodical literature from this time abounds with false and unscriptural statements, that would not have been tolerated once, but the conscience of

the "one assembly of God," was no more in a condition to judge such matters, and reserved its strength for keeping that one assembly together. In proof of which I may state that some, not content with practising "Infant Baptism," considered, that what was intended as a benefit to their babes could not be less so to their faithful servants, albeit they had made no confession of faith in Christ, and if Mary or Jane was willing to submit to it, their master was ready to include *them* in his *household baptism*.

I now return to Mr. Dorman and Capt. Hall. Their position was truly pitiable. Both were deeply taught in the Word, and they had sacrificed not a little for Christ's sake. Their ministry had been much blessed in former years. They could no longer own Mr. Darby, and had to withdraw from the "one body" to which they had been bound by the strongest ties, *but here they stopped*. It never occurred to them having had evidence of the untrustworthiness of Mr. Darby, to look back and see whether they might not have been misled by his circulars at the time of the division. They did not enquire whether the fearful charges he brought against Bethesda were or were not the creation of a hasty and excitable mind. They did not judge themselves for their share in having given currency to these charges. They could not return either to the Independents or to the Establishment from which they had severally come out, and they went into *solitary confinement*, or, in other words, kept themselves aloof from all Christian fellowship, and lost, as I did once, all power and heart for further service. There were several other godly and well instructed men who left about the same

time for conscience sake. These did not see their way to becoming petrified by following the same course, and after a longer or shorter period of consideration, united with assemblies of Brethren holding the same Church principles as "Bethesda," and in fellowship with her, commonly known as the "*Open Brethren*." Here they found a hearty welcome for their ministry.

Yet, though the refuge they found is largely the result of the contest for the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free, in which "Bethesda" bore the brunt and endured the bitterest calumny, a few only have given *her* the right hand of fellowship since. Is it that a lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it, or is it only a vague feeling of dread like some have on entering what they hear is a haunted house, and were once taught to believe was a net of Satan? God knows; but I can only say that in my case the remembrance of the lies that I have listened to with interest, and circulated with pleasure, are among the most painful of my memories.

Dear Mr. Craik entered into his rest before I knew how I had wronged him; but on my return to England, eight years after I left the Exclusives, I sifted the charges brought both against him and the Church of which he was so faithful a pastor. Our departed brother, Robert Brown, a man of most sensitive conscience, greatly helped me in this. On the other side I was met by statements that certain persons, whose names could be given, and known to uphold Mr. Newton's heresy—as it was termed—*had been received* into fellowship at Bethesda. I asked, "Is there any evidence to show that either Mr. Müller or Mr. Craik,

or their helpers, knew that such was the case?" *No, there was not.* "Then," said I to my informant, "to whom does guilt of indifference to the Lord's honour rightly belong? To 'Bethesda,' who judged and condemned the error, but received unawares those who maintained it—or to you, who being fully informed of that person or persons heretical views, withheld that information from the Church who received them?" And here I may give you a word of counsel in dealing with Exclusives whom you may by chance overhear denouncing us. Do not let your anger kindle, or suffer yourself to be drawn into a discussion, or you may find, as dear S. Bickley says, it makes you ill. Just take out pencil and paper (or ask for it), and put down the information received: ask for the authority upon which it is given, and state your intention of making strict inquiries, and if that does not make the accuser's mouth shut like a limpet, I never was more mistaken.

For most of my historical information I am indebted to the work entitled "Darbyism—its rise, progress, and development," by H. Groves (J. E. Hawkins, 17, Paternoster Row). Some have resented the severity of the writer's language: it has seemed impossible that Christians known to them as so just and mild in the affairs of this life, that they would spend a week in trying to find out if a servant was really guilty of stealing a pocket-handkerchief before dismissing her, would yet renounce a company of believers without asking them a single question. If the shelves and drawers that yet contain evidence of much that has been said and done since the division, could be examined, my brother would be found—no.

more to have overstated the case than if he had described the expanse of water *visible* at any point of the south coast as "The English Channel." Yes, indeed, and so is a great deal more that lies behind it.

E.—Now, can you tell me anything more of Mr. Newton?

B.—He is still living, and known as an able defender of the truth, whether assailed by Ritualism or Infidelity. Nor in the Scriptural expositions which he has published, during more than thirty years, have I heard of error (such as has always been attached to his name) being detected.

Before the division took place, he was made aware, of having taught, in his refutation of Irving's errors as to the Person of our Lord, that which in one point agreed thereto; and he immediately, in a manly and Christian spirit, publicly withdrew the same with expressions of sorrow for what he had done. (Nov. 26th, 1847.)

But he must have observed that "Bethesda," *after* condemning his tracts of 1848, incurred greater hatred and suspicion from the Exclusives than before; and he may have had good cause to expect, that were he in review of the past to condemn these tracts himself, such acknowledgment would have been regarded by the same judges as the result of "Satanic influence." Under these circumstances, I, for one, cannot blame him, if he considered the wisest course to be—silence as to the past, and more careful walking as to the future.

And now let me draw your attention to the condition of our Exclusive Brethren at the present time.

It affords us profitable teaching, whether as a warning to such as may be tempted hastily to cast in their lot with a house that is divided against itself, or as giving an illustration of our old text: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

It will not be a matter of surprise to any that the action towards Dr. C——, spoken of in our conversation on *Discipline*, roused to resistance some of those who had longest and most patiently endured Mr. Darby's yoke. Previous to the rupture, there were scenes in the ruling Saturday night meeting, and in many assemblies in London, that only find a parallel in the accounts we receive of what occasionally takes place in the French Cabinet. When Mr. J. G. Bellet's righteous soul was vexed within him, at similar manifestations of the flesh among those who were accounted to rule in *his* day, he exclaimed to his beloved leader: "Oh, my dear John, this is *position* without *condition*, and position without condition will never do at all!"

Bitter as were his words against his recognized opponents, Mr. Darby's language was yet more vehement against his friends who withstood his acts of discipline. His public denunciation of Mr. Kelly, who took Dr. C——'s part, will never be forgotten by those who were present; and by some it was felt to be the death-knell of Exclusivism.

Though Mr. Kelly had every kind of insult, covert and open, heaped upon him in the months that followed, he did not withdraw, and, consequently, a charge was constructed on which to "put him out." Large numbers were excommunicated at the same time and for similar reasons. Some of these formed

gatherings which, acting on their own responsibility, admitted certain "Open Brethren," whose fellowship and ministry they soon found to be to their profit. Their elders, instead of listening to the old slanders with the awe-struck submission of former years, challenged Mr. Kelly for proof at every point when he remonstrated with them, and frequently gave him the lie in a most unpleasant manner. He had republished charges against "Bethesda," and those whom for thirty years he has constantly defamed, in order to prevent *his* meetings from taking similar ground to "Open Brethren;" and he is now fully occupied in excommunicating those who resist his conclusions.

Mr. Darby died at Bournemouth in the eighty-first year of his age, in the fall of 1881. The one who appears now to rule in his stead is Mr. J. Butler Stoney; and Mr. D. might have said of him as Paul did of Titus: "Walked we not in the same spirit, walked we not in the same steps?"

As if the hundreds who left with Mr. Kelly were not enough to make him reflect on what might be the course of those who remained, Mr. Stoney has rent his section of the Exclusive meetings all over the country by the action he has taken against Mr. Clarence E. Stuart, of Reading, one of the ablest biblical scholars left among them. The doctrine on which he and his adherents are cast out is some fine drawn distinction between a Christian's standing and condition; but the obscurity of Mr. Stoney's language, and his inability fairly to represent his opponent's teaching, preclude me from being able to form any judgment on the point at issue. While he has been thus engaged, Lord A. P. Cecil has been making sad

havoc amongst the Exclusive Assemblies in Canada and the United States, on account of their receiving the teaching of Mr. F. W. Grant, of New York.

This brother is charged with the heresy (?) of believing that Old Testament Saints were quickened—born of God—and had the same divine life as New Testament believers. Lord A. P. Cecil maintains that this lowers the saints of this day to the level of a godly Jew! He asserts that New Testament saints have a “double quickening,” which he founds upon the expression, “life more abundantly.” (John x. 10.)

Let us examine this matter for a moment. If a lad, living during the last century, had been asked if it were possible to construct an iron horse, weighing many tons, and possessed of power sufficient to draw hundreds of people along the ground with the swiftness of a bird—would he not have rejected such a thing at once as impossible? If a youth at the present time were asked a similar question, he would not only affirm it, but might even be able to explain how the motive power is given. Is the boy of to-day essentially a superior being to his ancestor of a hundred years ago, or has he only had greater advantages? Now to apply the simile: “Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth crucified” among us, as He was before the Galatians, and we have thus had an insight into the working of the Father’s heart toward us, which the Old Testament saints never had, before whom His love was not thus proved. Does the Lord esteem *them* less because they had not been thus privileged? Does He mention Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, or even Jonah, as if they were saints of a lower degree? Verily not. Would that the *inferences* that

lead our brethren to these conclusions could be once more examined in the full light of the Word!

But to return. Beside those meetings, which have begun to be called "Kellyite," there are many which have ceased altogether to correspond with head quarters on matters of discipline. Yet, so badly have they been trained, as a rule, that an unsound but eloquent teacher seldom fails in making a "split" if he is so inclined. Should the Meeting-room be owned by one in fellowship, and he or she sympathizes with this individual, the majority may be under the necessity of seeking a place of worship elsewhere—which is a grievance that requires no comment.

If a company of the most godly men in England (outside "Brethren" altogether) were to consent to judge the leaders of Exclusivism by their tracts and letters alone, they would find ambition, intrigue, false witness, and ruthless disregard of the sufferings inflicted on others, as truly, as they would in the worst spiritual despotism the world has known.

If they were further to enquire into the *results* of their acting, they would discover that the sudden check of the outflow of love in its accustomed channels, in compliance with their arbitrary will, had produced broken hearts, blighted lives, withered testimonies, paralysis, poverty, insanity, and even suicide, to an extent that would really appal them.

Further, if they could reckon up the sons and daughters, with every advantage in the way of godly training, who have rushed into the slough of open sin, become entangled in the meshes of Rome, or wandered helplessly in the trackless waste of "Modern thought," all in consequence of seeing such results

taking place, I should not be surprised at the question: Do you call such guides as these *shepherds* or *wolves*? We cannot say the one, we dare not say the other; but one of God's fixed laws is: that where any position is built on what is known to be *untruth*, judicial blindness follows—in other words: *They know not what they do.*

The foregoing is but a faint outline of the evil that has come upon our brethren. If I were to give you an account from material easily within my reach, of what has been SAID, DONE and SUFFERED by them during the last seven years, it would be a tale to make both your ears to tingle; and the apostle Paul, were he a listener, would stand aghast in mingled horror and grief. What I have recorded is, I trust, sufficient to disenchant the earnest though restless soul from seeking in their communion to enjoy a closer walk with God; and it ought to make us unspeakably thankful to our Father in heaven for having given to this Church pastors who were content to be ruled by the Word of God, instead of men who undertook to rule independently of it.

When I remember the tender conscience, love for the Word, readiness to obey the Lord's will the moment that will was understood, the joyful bearing of reproach for Christ's sake, and other precious fruits of the Spirit of God, in some of those now suffering cruelly for not being able to understand in their distraction whether to turn to the right or to the left, I groan over my inability to afford any of them the consolation they need.

But while we would not invite a single individual to cross the threshold of Bethesda while

misgiving exists as to the honour of the Lord being precious in our sight; we do venture to assure one and all that the same Spirit whose guidance they so fully recognise when gathered for worship, is able also, without assistance from London, to direct each assembly in the ordering of its FAMILY MATTERS, if only it will learn how to WAIT FOR HIM.

Some who have known the purport of the last chapter in this book have urged that since the one whose actions are so constantly condemned is now no longer on earth to answer for himself, and is undoubtedly in the Lord's presence, it cannot be the mind of God that the evil of his ways should be made known. My answer is that the God of Jacob has not left the record of an untarnished life in describing His servant, nor is the man after God's own heart presented as a spotless character. Further, the text that I have often had quoted to me in Latin, to the effect that we should never speak but what is good of the dead, I can find in no corner of my Bible.

But if, as I firmly believe, the mischief wrought by Mr. Darby among the children of God is largely the result of a mental *infirmity* not unknown in the sister island—I mean a quality of mind, however richly endowed, which wholly disables it from taking evidence in a case when passion has once been roused—then would not our brother, now from his Master's presence, desire that the mischief should be pointed out, and its further progress, if possible, arrested? If he has left behind him a sorrowfully large collection of letters such as we have considered, we gladly remember that there is a greater number of names whose record is on high—of those whom the glowing

Gospel, preached by him in the power of the Spirit, transformed from brands fit only for the burning into bright and beautiful lights that have borne witness to the truth in this evil day.

One remark more, and I have done: There is a tendency in most minds to trace wide-spread evil to a single source, as some histories ascribe the division that rent asunder Israel and Judah, to the fatal act of Rehoboam when he ascended the throne. But a careful reader of the Word recognizes the calamity as God's judgment on idolatry set up in the nation that dishonoured His holy name. Thus the light and the power given to "Brethren" who originally clung to the written word alone, *exalted them above measure*, and instead of allowing us to take the prominent place in testimony we anticipated, our God has smitten us with the PLAGUE OF EVIL SPEAKING, which has brought us into deserved contempt—but here is our comfort: "When we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

FINIS.

APPENDIX.

LETTER FROM ANTHONY NORRIS GROVES TO J. N. DARBY.

Milford Haven, March 10th, 1836.

My Dear DARBY,

As the stormy weather threatens a little delay, I am not willing to leave England without a few words in reply to your note, and a short explanation of some other points that interest me. I have ever regretted having had so few opportunities of seeing and conversing with you since my return to England, and thereby explaining many things that might have allowed us to depart on the whole more happily than now, yet I wish you to feel assured that nothing has estranged my heart from you, or lowered my confidence in your being still animated by the same enlarged and generous purposes that once so won and rivetted me; and though I feel you have departed from those principles by which you once hoped to have effected them, and are in principle returning to the city from whence you departed, still my soul so reposes in the truth of your heart to God that I feel it needs but a step or two more to advance and you will see all the evils of the systems from which you profess to be separated to spring up among yourselves. You will not discover this so much from the workings of your own soul as by the spirit of those who have been nurtured up

from the beginning in the system they are taught to feel the only tolerable one ; that not having been led like you, and some of those earliest connected with you, through deep experimental suffering and sorrow, they are little acquainted with the real truth that may exist amidst inconceivable darkness : there will be little pity and little sympathy with such, and your union daily becoming one of doctrine and opinion more than life and love, your government will become — unseen, perhaps, and unexpressed — yet, one wherein, overwhelmingly, is felt the authority of *men* ; you will be known more by what you witness *against* than what you witness for, and practically this will prove that you witness against all but yourselves as certainly as the Walkerites or Glassites : your Shibboleth may be different, but it will be as *real*. It has been asserted, as I found from your dear brother W—— and others, that I have changed my principles ; all I can say is, that as far as I know what those principles were in which I gloried on first discovering them in the Word of God, I now glory in them ten times more since I have experienced their applicability to all the various and perplexing circumstances of the present state of the Church ; allowing you to give every individual, and collection of individuals, the standing *God* gives them, without identifying yourself with any of their evils. I ever understood our principle of communion to be the possession of the common life or common blood of the family of God (for the life is in the blood) ; these were our early thoughts, and are my most matured ones. The transition your little bodies have undergone, in no longer standing forth the witnesses for the glorious and simple *truth*, so much as standing forth witnesses against all that they judge error, have lowered them in my apprehension from heaven to earth in their position of witnesses. What I mean is, that then all our thoughts were conversant about how we might *ourselves* most effectually manifest forth that life we had received by Jesus, knowing that that alone

could be as the Shepherd's voice to the living children, and where we might find that life in others ; and when we were persuaded we had found it, bidding them, on the Divine claim of this common life (whether their thoughts on other matters were narrow or enlarged), to come and share with us, in the fellowship of the common Spirit, in the worship of our common head ; and as Christ had received them, so would we to the glory of God the Father ; and farther, that we were free, within the limits of the truth, to share with them in *part*, though we could not in *all*, their services. In fact, as we received them for the life, we would not *reject* them for their systems, or refuse to recognise any *part* of their systems, because we disallowed much. Trusting that if this inter-communion could be established, to effect all we desire by being upheld by God, in walking in the light, as the Christ-like means of witnessing against any darkness that might be in them, according to the rule of the Lord ; John iii. 19 : " This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil, neither will they come to the light lest their deeds should be reprov'd." A more difficult ministry of witness, than a preaching one of words, or separating one of persons, yet possessing a *much more* mighty power over the hearts of others and a much more influential one in blessing ; and which, dear brother, I know no heart more ready to acknowledge than your own. The moment the witnessing for the common life as our *bond* gives place to a witnessing *against* errors by separation of persons and preaching (errors allowably compatible with the common life), every individual, or society of individuals, first comes before the mind as those who might need witnessing against, and all their conduct and principles have first to be examined and approved before they can be received ; and the position which this occupying the seat of judgment will place you

in will be this : the most narrow-minded and bigoted will rule because his conscience cannot and will not give way, and therefore the more enlarged heart must yield. It is into this position, dear D——, I feel some little flocks are fast tending, if they have not already attained it. Making *light* not *life* the measure of communion. But I am told by our beloved brethren, C. and H., that if I give up this position of witnessing *against evil* in this PECULIAR WAY OF SEPARATION from the systems in which any *measure* of it is mixed up, I make our position one of simple, unpardonable schism, because we might join some of the many other systems. I cannot be supposed, of course, to know fully *their* ground of acting, but I thought I knew *yours*, at least your *original* ones. Was not the principle we laid down as to separation from all existing bodies at the outset, this : that we felt ourselves bound to separate from all individuals and systems, *so far* as they required us to do what our consciences would not allow, or restrained us from doing what our consciences required, and no further ; and were we not as free to join and act with any individual, or body of individuals, as they were free *not* to require us to do what our consciences did *not* allow, or prevent our doing what they did ? and in this freedom did we not feel brethren should *not* force liberty on those who were bound, nor withhold freedom from those who were free ?

Did we not feel constrained to follow the apostolic rule of *not judging other men's consciences*, as to liberty, by our own ; remembering it is written, " Let *not* him that eateth despise him that eateth not ; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth ; seeing that God hath received " both the one and the other ? Now it is one of these two grounds ; their preventing me from, or demanding from me, other than the Lord demands, that divides me in a *measure* from every system ; as my *own proper* duty to God, rather

than as witnessing against THEIR evils. As any system is in its provision narrower or wider than the truth, I either stop short, or go beyond its provisions, but I would INFINITELY RATHER BEAR *with all their evils*, than SEPARATE from THEIR GOOD. These were the *then* principles of our separation and inter-communion ; we had resolved never to try to *get men to act* in UNIFORMITY, *further than they FELT* in UNIFORMITY ; neither by frowns or smiles ; and this, for one simple reason, that we saw no authority given us from God thus to act ; nor did our experience lead us to feel it the best means at all of promoting their blessing or our common aim of a *perfect spiritual uniformity* of judgment ; whilst to ourselves it afforded a *ready* OUTLET to the PROPENSITIES of the FLESH, under the appearance of spiritual authority and zeal for the truth. But in all these matters, we desired that our way might be bright as the light, and our words drop noiselessly as the dew, and if, at the last, they remained “ otherwise minded,” we would seek of God, that even He should reveal it unto them. There is something at present so like building what you destroyed, as if when weak you can be liberal and large, but when holpen with a little strength, the *true* spirit of sectarianism begins to bud ; so that being “ *one of us* ” has become a stronger bond than oneness in the power of the life of God. I know it is said (dear Lady Powerscourt told me so) that so long as any terms were kept with the Church of England, by mixing up in *any* measure with their ministrations, when there was nothing to offend your conscience, they bore your testimony most patiently, but after your entire rejection of them, they pursued you with undeviating resentment, and this was brought to prove that the then position was wrong, and the present right. But all I see in this is, that whilst you occupied the place of only witnessing against those things which the divine life within themselves recognized as evil, and separating from them ONLY SO FAR as they

separated from Christ, you established them as judges of themselves, and of themselves they were condemned ; and at the same time you conciliated their heavenly affections, by allowing all that really was of the Lord, and sharing in it, though the system itself in which you found these golden grains, you could not away with. But the moment your position and your language implied a perfect separation, alike from the evil and the good, and a rejection of them, in consequence of their system, without discrimination, you no longer had their consciences with you, but they felt that though only a brother in a Father's house, you exercised more than a Father's power, without a Father's heart of mercy, and they, therefore, appealed from you to your common head, both in behalf of themselves and their systems. There is no truth more established in my own mind than this, that to occupy the position of the maximum of power, in witnessing to the consciences of others, you must stand before their unbiassed judgment as evidently *wishing* to allow in them *more* than their own consciences allow, rather than less, proving that your heart of love is more alive to find a covering for faults, than your eagle eye of light to discover them. I send you this letter as we were the first to act on these principles, rather than to H—— and C——, whose faith and love I do so truly desire to follow. They have written to me two very long and kind letters, which I purpose more effectually and fully to answer, by meeting the positions contained in them, in a little tract, which I hope to prepare on the voyage, and finally to publish.

I particularly regret not meeting you at Bristol, as I had much to say to you relative to Rhenius, and other things connected with India, for my heart would naturally seek sympathy and fellowship with you and those dear brethren with whom I have no dividing thoughts relative to the great bearings of truth, or the truths themselves, in which

lie the power and peace of the Gospel,—neither in the objects or principles of ministry do I differ ;—my difference with you is only as to the manner in which you maintain your position of witnessing for the good against the evil. I feel no one ever expects me, when an acknowledged *visitor* in the house of another, to be answerable for the ordering of that house, or as thereby *approving* it—they would naturally come to the house in which I had control, and where the acts were looked upon as *mine*, to form such a judgment ; and even in such a case, if I was but *one* among many in the government, no honest mind would make *me* responsible for faults, against which, in my place and according to my power, I protested ; because I submitted to those acts of others, rather than forego a *greater* good, or incur a greater evil. If it is said man cannot discriminate, nor feel the *force* of my witness, unless I separate, not by heart and life, but by contiguity of person, altogether from all kinds of false systems, my answer is, that He, whose place it is to judge, and to whom we are called to approve our hearts, can, and to *Him*, in this matter, I am content to stand or fall.

Some will not have me hold communion with the Scotts, because their views are not satisfactory about the Lord's Supper ; others with you, because of your views about baptism ; others with the Church of England, because of her thoughts about ministry. On my principles I receive them all ; but on the principle of witnessing against evil, I should reject them all. I feel them all, in their several particulars, sinning against the mind and heart of Christ, and letting in, in principle, the most tremendous disorders, and it is not for me to measure the comparative sin of one kind of disobedience against another. I make use of my fellowship in the Spirit, to enjoy the common life together, and witness for that, as an opportunity to set before them those little particulars into which, notwithstanding all their

grace and faithfulness, their godliness and honesty—they have fallen. Nor shall I ever feel separation from the good for the sake of the evil, to be my way of witnessing against it, till I see infinitely clearer than I now do, that it is *God's*. I naturally unite fixedly with those in whom I see and feel most of the life and power of God. But I am as free to visit other churches, where I see much of disorder, as to visit the houses of my friends, though they govern them not as I could wish ; and, as I have said, I should feel it equally unreasonable and unkind, for any brother to judge me for it, though I leave him in perfect liberty to judge himself. You must not however, dear brother, think, from anything I have said, that I shall not write freely and fully to you, relative to things in India, feeling assured in my own heart, that your enlarged and generous spirit, so richly taught of the Lord, will one day burst again those bands which narrower minds than yours have encircled you with, and come forth again, rather anxious to advance ALL the living members of the living Head into the stature of men, than to be encircled by any little bodies, however numerous, that own you for their founder. I honour, love, and respect your position in the Church of God ; but the deep conviction I have that your spiritual power was incalculably greater when you walked in the midst of the various congregations of the Lord's people, manifesting forth the life and the power of the gospel, than now, is such that I cannot but write the above as a proof of my love and confidence that your mind is above considering who these remarks came from, rather than what truth there may be in them

Yours very affectionately in the gospel,

A. N. GROVES.

March 10th, 1836.

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