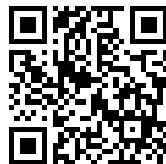

This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<http://books.google.com>



A CALL

TO

THE CONVERTED.

BY

WILLIAM GEORGE LAMBERT.

-A

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.—*Paul to the Ephesian Church.*

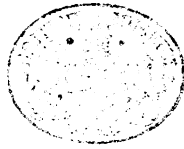
OXFORD,

PUBLISHED BY J. L. WHEELER;

AND SOLD BY HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO. PATERNOSTER ROW; NISBET, BERNERS'-STREET, LONDON; AND ALL OTHER BOOKSELLERS.

1831.

Price One Shilling.



COOKE, PRINTER, OXFORD.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE only true position of the church, is that of being, in the midst of all that is dark and dead, THE ACTIVE ALLY OF GOD IN SPREADING THE GLORY OF CHRIST. If by any means she is found dislodged from this position, a saint lives but to replace her in it. The Son came to us, and dwelt with us, and died for us, that he might have such a church, that he might raise one up in the world. If then a child of God hath, for his portion, the mind of Christ; if, in all subordinate respects, his sympathy is perfect with his Lord and Master; then, beyond question, will the *primary* object of concern with Christ be the *primary* object of concern with him. For the sake of the church, to give it existence, Christ lived and died; for the sake of the church, to help in strengthening it if standing, in raising it if fallen, the saint should live and die. This one grand point hath been never *practically* discerned in its distinct,

prominent, and exclusive importance since the earliest ages of the Gospel ; nor am I acquainted with the individual now who appears to see it in such a manner *as makes him duly act upon it*. This consideration hath principally induced me to come before the world in the following pages. The length to which they extend is not very great, and yet perhaps they will be deemed chargeable with repetition. I can only say, I would have it so : my own mind hath been full of a leading idea ; and I shall not be sorry if its frequent recurrence evidences my conviction of its paramount importance.

KING-STREET, OXFORD,

July 28, 1831.

ERRATA.

Page 16, line 16, for "of that" read "that of"

Page 20, line 17, insert a semicolon after "personally be"

Page 38, line 18, insert "the" before "Apocalyptic Epistles"

Page 55, line 16, read "Therefore, ever think of this,"

Page 58, line 5, read "no where" instead of "now here"

Digitized by Google

A CALL TO THE CONVERTED.

To the saints and servants of the Most High God, redeemed unto Him from the power of Satan by the precious blood-shedding of our Saviour Christ, who is the Prince of Life and the Lord of Glory, and called by the Spirit of holiness into the light of his eternal kingdom, which shall soon be visibly set up on the earth;—unto all such, throughout the land, be grace and mercy from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Brethren, if the present occasion were one on which I was writing to the children of this world, it might become me to be studious in framing some apology for presuming to appear before them in the character of their counsellor; but to you, beloved, need I, to justify my assumption of that capacity, allege ought else than that from the first it pleased the Father of Mercies, Lord of Heaven and Earth, to hide the mysteries of his will from the wise and prudent, while he revealed them unto babes? and that if I now stand up as the

remembrancer of my brethren, it is because the same unchangeable God has spoken in the ears of one who would fain deem of himself, as the least of his children, and the chief of sinners, that, which having so spoken, he requires and expects to be proclaimed upon the housetops.

But moreover, brethren, that Lord whom in our spirits we serve, hath *commanded* us by his servant Paul to exhort one another daily; and this I say with all confidence, that never was there a time when the saints failed more in this duty, and never was there a time when it was more loudly and signally called for: there never was a time when the feebleness of the Church was so conspicuous, when its condition of disunion and disorder was so lamentable; nor, alas, when our eyes were, I may safely say, so *diligently* averted from the real seat of the evil, nor when the artifices of Satan were so mighty and successful to keep them so, to rivet and consolidate this condition, to perpetuate disunion and systematize disorder. Yea, this I will repeat most deliberately, the Lord being my witness, that my heart overflows the while with sorrow to think it should be so:—not only hath the love of many waxed cold, and there is a decay of faith and hope as deep as it is general, but doctrines are preached, and principles are laid down among us, calculated precisely to bar up the way of escape from that state of bondage and depression in which the Adversary is causing us to lie. But I charge every soul of man, whoever he may be, under whose notice these pages come, as he would be found faithful to his Lord, as he would desire in his heart to say, let God be true, but every man a liar,

to exclude from his thoughts the influence of any such doctrine or principle; yes, and the influence of all other fleshly notions, which are surely seen to be foolishness and vanity before God, whatever show of sanction and authority they may come with;—I charge him to abolish from his mind every consideration save that which simply and singly respects the discovery of the mind of Christ in the word of Christ. Again, brethren, and again, I say, it is with that mind alone, made apparent from the Scriptures of God, that we, if we are believers indeed, shall acknowledge we have to do; and it is while I endeavour its elucidation from that exclusive source, that I now challenge you to yield the most solemn and heedful attention. Of the practical obligations which, once clearly developed and established, it verily begets, I shall speak hereafter, as of other matters in close connexion with it.

He, unto whom it hath been given to read the Gospel of John with a clear and comprehensive view of its general scope and structure, will immediately recognize the following as a correct outline of its arrangement. It consists of three distinct parts: the first, comprised in ch. i. vv. 1—14, containeth the Apostle's own solemn and sublime testimony to the person and offices of the Messiah; the second, reaching down from v. 15 to the end of ch. xii. is the account of his being preached and proposed, either by himself or the Baptist, as such person invested with such offices to the world; the world rejecting him, he rejects the world; and from ch. xiii. to the end, which is the third part, we find him henceforward confining his ministry to the *church*; we find him opening his mind to it in the fullest, the

most earnest, and the most gracious manner, declaring its privileges and endowments, its services and sufferings, not only in the form of direct statement and injunction, but also in that of blessed prayer and intercession with the Father. O beloved, let us take heed to ourselves how we slight the parting words of our Lord; yea, unless our love for him be mere pretence, let us count it our greatest sin, and shame, and vileness, if we are not ready, before every thing, and in spite of every thing, to realize these the last communications of his confidence and love.

I say then it is in this particular portion of God's word, that we shall find the will of Christ concerning his church clearly expressed. And what if I confess that I know not whether, with a view of gaining light on this, the most important point of all, sufficient diligence hath been employed in searching it since the third century of the Christian æra? Thus the mighty God is continually glorifying himself by man's weakness and foolishness, by man's incredible proneness to overlook the plainest and most prominent parts of the truth, when once it is left in man's keeping only: in like manner, from the days of the Apostles to those of Luther, the fundamental doctrine of justification by faith was never adequately and completely displayed. Miserable earth! in which nothing lovely takes lasting root, but in which truth withers away, smothered amid the rank thick weeds of error and falsehood that shoot up to overwhelm it as soon as planted.

Now, therefore, brethren, from these discourses of our Lord, bearing so pointed a reference to the constitution and character of his church, it shall be my en-

deavour, with clearness and fulness to extract their practical sum and substance. In the first place, that which he presses on their minds as the most important result of his removal from them, is the sending of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, whose office it should be to supply his own personal presence: he was to “*abide with*” the church. In regard to which abiding two things are to be remarked. First, it was to be *for ever*, so that although the church might fall away from abiding in the Spirit, she might at any time by faith and repentance be restored to it: secondly, it was to be *sensible*¹: those in whom he dwelt should be *sensible* of his indwelling: “the world seeth him not; neither knoweth him; *but ye know him*; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” Thus much as to the *nature*; next let us consider the *effects* of the Spirit’s residence with the church. And here I say the first effect of all, the infinitely blessed, glorious, and lovely effect, that to which all others are subordinate, and from which all others flow, is *oneness*. First, oneness with Christ, then oneness with the Father through oneness with Christ, and then through oneness with both, oneness with each other; and, lastly, the sure effect of oneness, love. So that here is the simple but everlasting order of things, first the indwelling of the Spirit, that next infallibly producing unity, and unity as infallibly producing love; though afterwards indeed love in its turn, preserves unity, and unity preserves the indwelling of the Spirit: as it is written, “endea-

¹ I mention this, because one accursed heresy current in these days is, that the operations of the Spirit are not distinguishable from those of the natural understanding. Besides which, I shall advert to it much hereafter.

vouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," or, of love: observe therefore of these three, the singular and the beautiful action and reaction. And behold the greatness of God's gift, and the fulness of Christ's redemption: for that redemption is more than deliverance from hell, and more than deliverance from the power of sin, yea, it is even more than deliverance from the anger of God; it stops short, I say, of nothing, *but close, sustained, active, and incessant communion with the mind of God*; and till such communion is experienced, the church is not in her right station, the candle is not on the candlestick, nor the city on the hill. For mark how the matter stands: before the Word was made flesh, and overcame flesh and the world and the devil, no common point of union and sympathy subsisted between God and his cast-off creature man, nor was there room for any other sentiment but that of mutual estrangement. But the death of Christ upon the cross was at once the highest mark of obedience to God, and of love to man; as such, it was of course well-pleasing to both: on the one hand, our Lord himself said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again;" and the church, on the other, could say, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." But when two parties are reconciled, between whom the relation is so close, and the breach that separated them so wide, as was the case between God and man, will their joy on the occasion be transient and superficial? will they not rather desire to rejoice henceforward *for ever* in each other? Above all, will not the author of their reconciliation be especially endeared to both, and *continue to be the main bond of their mutual affection?*

See accordingly if it was not so in the earliest and purest days of the Gospel; read the first prayer of the church, recorded in the fourth of Acts, *and she will be found intent only on joining with her God to exalt the name of his holy child Jesus.* But how was that prayer answered? The place in which they were assembled shook again, and all were filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake the word of God with boldness. Here then is the province and prerogative and blessedness of the church, that in which her power and her very life are bound up, that for which she is left on earth, and by which she links it to heaven; yea, so long as she stands on this exalted ground she continues to hold high, holy, and perpetual communion, commerce, and correspondence with her God. And none shall for one moment forbid her such. For while God and the church are thus united in the prosecution of a common object, their original reconciliation is continued and advanced, is ever gaining fresh life and force, and He that first brought them together, still keeps them together. For if the Redeemer lives for ever, so doth his redemption; yea, his death but laid the foundation of redemption: it is his eternal life at the right hand of God that carries on and perfects it; and so long as the church should maintain her due elevation, He would be ever redeeming it to fresh apprehensions of God's glory, and to fresh consciousness of his love. So would her growth in grace be signal and beautiful, and she would take root downward and bear fruit upward, and would come out in the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.

That this is the proper portion of the church, or, which I beg may be carefully observed, of any particular church, will appear on weighing such expressions as the following, which occur more than once in the portion of Scripture now under consideration, and which mark in the simplest language the unspeakable privileges of those who believe in the Son of God. They are these: "My peace I leave with you;" "My joy shall be fulfilled in you." But what is Christ's peace, and what is Christ's joy? It arose from his encountering and overcoming in our weak and sinful nature, the flesh, the world, and the devil, which together just keep men as far from God as hell itself is. For verily that which had prevailed to drag down the collective race of man into the bottomless pit, from which the whole angelic host of heaven could not have delivered it, might not stand against the incarnate Jehovah; he was that just One, who of all the sons of men alone bore up in perfect righteousness a human will against countless hostile tendencies and influences, and brought it into complete communion with God, without a moment's slightest aberration. So that Christ's peace was peace with God: and Christ's joy was joy in God, joy in the knowledge of God, joy in the love of God, joy in the glory of God. And that peace and that joy he bequeathed to us, and could bequeath nothing more, and nothing better, for God is all in all to man². He is in himself enough for man's

² This sense of God's all-sufficiency Philip showed in saying, "Lord show us the Father, and it sufficeth us:" it is this want of and craving after the chief good of the human soul which has made all the restlessness

holiness, and man's happiness, and man's excellency. And salvation respects God only, and damnation respects God only; for to see God is heaven, and to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of God is hell. And the devil's work respects God only, and Christ's work respects God only; the work of the former lies in keeping God and the soul asunder, that of the latter in bringing God and the soul together; and if we who name the name of Christ, are not conscious of walking every moment of our existence in the light of God's countenance, and in the enjoyment of the smile of his love, we have not yet tasted, or we have miserably fallen from, the fulness of that redemption wherewith Christ redeemed us; yea, which he, with pain and shame, with tears and blood, and agony, and death, wrought out for us.

Hitherto, brethren, I have been speaking only of that oneness which the indwelling of Christ's Spirit produces for us with the Father; to which it was proper that I should assign the first place, because it is infinitely the first in excellence, and because it is the source, and soul, and foundation of that other oneness which I next proceed to consider, *and which indeed is the embodying of the former*, giving it outward form and manifestation: and this is the oneness which the saints having among themselves, compose a church. And oh! what stress is laid on it by the Lord Christ, with what authority is it commanded, with what earnestness is it inculcated, with what incitements is it

and misery that fill the page of man's history: Christ it was that restored it, Christ it only was that could have restored it. O be it all our care that it may not have been restored in vain!

enforced! By it we shall be known as Christ's disciples, by it we shall glorify our heavenly Father, by it we shall be called out of the world, and kept out of the world, and kept together. And, brethren, let me say it, nothing more is wanting to a church; while, without it, every thing is wanting. We are at present much taken up with considering how far the church hath grounds for expecting the resuscitation of miraculous powers; and great are the searchings of heart which the agitation of this question gives birth to. Now to my own apprehension, nothing can be plainer than that Scripture affords not the least warrant for confining them to one age more than to another, but that they are made to depend on faith, and faith only, and that the design and use of them is to glorify Christ risen: but then, brethren, it is equally plain to me that that faith must be embodied in a pure and spiritual church, a church formed and drawn together *solely* by the power of the principles above described, *solely*, that is, by the constraining energy of the Spirit. Brethren, it is equally plain to me, that Christ risen will be glorified first in another and "a more excellent way" than that of speaking with tongues, or of removing mountains, even the way of charity. The Spirit of holiness, before he displays to the world a repetition of Pentecostal miracles, will prefer displaying the more astonishing, the more glorious, and the more lovely miracle of stubborn human wills, and lifeless human hearts, brought into gracious, sweet, and fervent union with the God of heaven and with each other³. I say, brethren,

³ For confirmation of this I refer to Acts i. 14, and ii. 1, begging it may be carefully noticed how clearly the order of the Spirit's operations is

that to look for the exercise of supernatural powers, to any considerable extent, in our present wretched and carnal condition of division and disorder, is to look for such actions and energies as health and vigour only can put forth, from a body exhausted by disease and mutilation.

Now, as the preaching Christ with power and boldness, and with signs and wonders following, is the way the church was destined to glorify him in the sight of the world externally; so internally, by the touching picture she should exhibit of union, harmony, and love. And it was in reference to the time when she should be established in this blessed state, that our Saviour bade his disciples so confidently rely on receiving whatsoever they should ask in his name, "that their joy might be full." In that day, filled and fired with the view of her Lord's transcendent beauty and excellency, he knew the church would desire, nay, *could* desire nothing but what concerned, more or less, the propagation of his glory: such petitions, as we were saying before, could not but be well pleasing to God, and then her "joy" would "be full" at receiving, in his answer to them, a precious pledge that she was in a state of acceptance and communion with him. Well indeed for such a cause it might be full. Brethren, I needs must reiterate the sentiments which I was before enlarging on, for they involve that mighty truth of which my soul is full; and the more so, because I perceive that in these days Satan is hiding it from men by the

marked, first producing close and fervent communion in the saints with God, and then union among themselves; and *then*, but not before, enabling them to speak with tongues and show forth other miracles.

intervention of fifty specious substitutes : nevertheless, bear witness, heaven and earth, it is nothing but a living union with the living God that the salvation of Christ implies, and calls on us to realize. So God hath magnified his great name, that all which hath taken place in time—the fall, with its huge, incalculable consequences of sin and misery, and the stupendous counter-scheme and apparatus of redemption—have been intended only to illustrate the respective conditions of an intelligent soul with or without its God.

. But, brethren, if the state of restoration—of more than restoration—of *constant* oneness with the divine mind, is blessed and glorious, blessed for men and glorious for God, we shall find in the Scriptures of the new covenant proportionable care taken to stir us up, and incite us to gain, maintain, and secure it. What a quantity of precepts and exhortations, and in what a variety of forms, yet amid that variety tending all uniformly to the same end, may there be found! to the end, I say, of congregating the saints into the form and condition of a pure and rightly-ordered church.

That, as I stated before, while it is the ultimate and formal result of the Spirit's indwelling, becomes in its turn the principle which is conservative of that indwelling. "And *above all these things* put on *love*, which is the *bond* of perfectness." "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called *in one body*." By this we are "the light of the world," for love is the effect of light, and "he that hateth his brother" shows that he "abideth in darkness;" by this we are the salt of the earth, (salt, even with Pythagoras, symbolized brotherly love,) by this we

bring abundantly forth "the fruits of the Spirit," and are "zealous of good works," and "fulfil the commandments of Christ;" modes of expression, which refer, all of them, to the sweet and various exercises and outgoings of mutual love among the saints of Christ, formed by that very love into a church. Greatly, greatly, brethren, have they erred, and fallen into the snare of the devil, who have contended hotly and pertinaciously for a form of ecclesiastical government, and have put it forward as a distinct question. What hath been the consequence? They have drawn aside attention from what is essential to what is circumstantial, and have begun at the superstructure instead of the basis. In this, as in a thousand other cases, let the children of light take a lesson from the children of this world. In the establishment of the various societies that are among *them* set up for purposes of gain, pleasure, science, or convenience, is it not *the operation of principles* that primarily draws individuals together, and is it not their care and aim to let it be so? Are *they* solicitous to enact rules and frame a constitution of things before unity of purpose hath engaged a number to concur and to cooperate in the undertaking? are they not instinctively aware that a common motive, once implanted in the minds of many, will go of itself more than half way towards generating a due and definite form of outward organization?

Brethren, by our carnality and lukewarmness, by our strifes, jealousies, and divisions, by our supineness, our deadness, things which the long familiarity of inveterate habit hath rendered no offence to us, or rather, (should I not say?) have rendered a pleasure; we have banished that which is the soul of the con-

gregations of the faithful, we have banished the holy Spirit of God, yea, we have grieved him, and we have quenched him; and in the very "dispensation of the Spirit" we are living without the Spirit. I say not, brethren, but that each one to whom it hath been savingly revealed, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, hath doubtless been spiritually born again, and hath the seed of God remaining in him: but so likewise was it with the Apostles when the Lord was on earth; flesh and blood had not revealed it to them that their master was the Christ, but his Father which is in heaven; and yet of those days John could say, that "the Holy Ghost *was not yet.*" O he exists not, so that he should call it existence, where he doth not exist in an effusion rich as that of Pentecost. But we, like the Apostles before Jesus was risen and glorified, have enough to secure our personal salvation; we have nothing more, and nothing more apparently we desire. Nevertheless, brethren, the church in the beginning was a city set on a hill; she stood forth on an eminence to which she ascended with her ascending Lord; with his glory, as he prayed, she was glorified; he from the right hand of God sent down upon her, and put into her the principles and energies, yea, the cherubic zeal of heaven. Now what are these? Read the description in the first chapter of Ezekiel, of the messengers and ministers that wait upon the presence of the Lord of Glory; mark how they are exhibited flashing forth swift as the lightning, and unerring as an arrow to execute the bidding of Jehovah; mark how their sympathetic devotedness to the service of the same high and holy One produces perfect oneness of will and movement among themselves; but, above

all, mark how the whole of this glorious and harmonious agency is wrought *by the indwelling and the inworking of the Spirit*, as it moved up and down among the living creatures, which went only whither the Spirit was to go. Brethren, there is none good but one, that is God; and there is no happiness, and no glory, and no excellency for any created intelligence, from the leading archangel down to the meanest of the children of men, but that of doing his most holy will; and it is to this glory, and happiness, and excellency, that Christ hath redeemed his saints. I say this again, and would say it, if need were, a thousand times over. But let us consider a while *how* this his redemption cometh to pass, briefly, because I have adverted before to it, and now recur to the topic only in my way to those conclusions which I shall further found on it.

The happiness of knowing, loving, and desiring to do the will of God being that from which man had fallen, and that being the only happiness of a creature, it was necessary, that if any *redemption* at all was in store for him, of that redemption this should be the subject matter; but when agreement is produced between two parties previously at variance, it implies the existence of a common ground on which they are enabled to meet. Now before the incarnation and work of Christ no such ground existed, to reconcile God with man, and man with God; and he who said, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me; Lo I come to do thy will, O God," alone supplied it. And now that it hath been erected, how is the fact made known to man and brought home to his conscience? By the power and

operation of the Spirit, who reveals the propitiation of Christ, who reveals the Father reconciled in the Son, who shows how man may become henceforward a fellow-worker with God, may be hallowed and exalted to an identity of purpose with God, in continuing to repose with responsive complacency on the same object, and in holding up that object to every creature under the sun as the only well pleasing one in heaven and in earth to the God who made all things. Brethren, this is the hill on which the city was built—*active* communion, centring in Christ, with the mind of our heavenly Father; and if active, and if so centring, destined *then* to know no pause, no decay, no interruption, but to go on from strength to strength, and from glory to glory. But the city stands no longer on the hill, when the power of the Gospel ceases to be of that active communion with the mind of God; and it is degraded down to the mere matter of individual salvation, when it is forgotten that Jesus Christ hath not only washed us from our sins in his own blood, but hath made us, also, kings and priests unto God. For the substitution of this inferior end, and the exalting it to the rank of the paramount and final one, instantly allows self to step in, and operate a thousand ways; all is then polluted and debased with self. The church is no longer raised above the level of the world around her: no, the saints are doubtfully and timorously intent on their own salvation, and so they grow faint-hearted, and the light of their good works becomes dim, because their souls are no longer at perfect leisure for them, no longer at perfect leisure to glorify their heavenly Father for the salvation they know to be theirs: they are no longer

doing the will of God, while the children of disobedience are walking in the vanity of their mind, and doing their own wills, and the will of their father the devil.

But then, brethren, that transcendent outpouring of the Spirit, that unspeakable gift of God which in an instant lifts the soul into divine oneness with the Father, never takes place without operating, as a collateral effect, equal oneness in the saints with each other: and if any man who excels in knowledge is now looking out for the revival of the Spirit's miraculous gifts among us, let him rest assured that the Spirit of holiness and of love will glorify himself as such before he will glorify himself as the Spirit of power; that before mighty works shall show forth themselves in any body of the elect, they shall all be continuing, like the disciples between the day of the ascension and that of Pentecost, *with one accord in prayer and supplication*, and shall be of one heart and one mind, and shall be gathered together in one place, and shall have, it may be, all things common: let him also rest assured, that if, as far as in him lies, he is obstructing this, the most glorious manifestation of the Spirit's power, by forbidding men under a silly pretence of schism to abandon their several corrupt systems; and if he is cutting up church fellowship by making the church's privileges no greater than those of the world, and by pushing the extent of Christ's intended redemption utterly beyond the plainest limits of Scripture; he is found, however unwittingly, to fight against God, and he is pulling down with his right hand what he is building up with his left.

Brethren, God in the beginning planted a garden,

and appointed it for man to dwell in, that he might walk with man in it; and he called Israel, whom he had chosen, out of Egypt, that he might walk among them, and might be their God, and that they might be his people; and he caused the temple to be built by Solomon, that he might have a special dwelling place among the sons of men: but a church, a Gospel church, is his *living* habitation, sweeter than the garden of Eden and more glorious than the temple of Solomon: in the Epistles how many are the texts which represent it under this aspect! Here God then would delight to expatiate; here is a system where he would be all in all, and where he would work in each individual both to will and to do. And this is what he covets. For what is it that causes the world of nature so greatly to surpass in loveliness the moral world? is it not that in the former nothing occurs to interfere with the pure operations and results of the divine energy and wisdom, while in the latter the will of man is for ever crossing the will of God, and begetting the foulest confusion and deformity? O it were a thing the most grievous to reflect upon, that the God of all goodness should be shut out from the souls and consciences of his intelligent creatures here on earth, if the more grievous fact did not remain behind, that after he had been at the pains to rear amid the surrounding barrenness and desolation a second tabernacle of lively stones, that also should have been suffered to fall to pieces, and the presence of Him that dwelt in it to have fled away. Now the question I ask is, Doth God love himself? yea, we know that he loves himself with an infinite love; and

therefore by the same rule he must love his own glory. That consists, and consists strictly, in the manifestation of his attributes and perfections to the understanding, to the full comprehension of his reasonable creatures. If such is the case, what follows? why, that he must love and desire to see set up a system in which he can freely put them forth, and worthily display them. But such a system is a gospel church in its right state, a church wholly informed and animated with the Spirit, filled with the divine fulness laid up in Christ, ardent with zeal for the glory of God and the chief good of man; which, in order to represent the character of Him who is light and love, should be itself all radiant with light and all glowing with love.

Brethren, hath or hath not the mind of Christ, which is the mind of God, been demonstrated and been confirmed both from Scripture and from reason; and hath it or hath it not been shown that it is to the desire and to the power of executing this mind, that the saints, by the Spirit, are redeemed? If it be so, and if nothing be more certain than that God must wish to see the oneness of the Saints with Himself and with each other systematically embodied in the world, as a witness for his own glory against that world, a consummation which would imply that he had a dwelling place once more among the children of men, can we hesitate as to our part? Can we refuse to see that it is the rearing up a dwelling-place into which we may recall our banished God? And how, it will of course next be asked, is this to be done? Our implements, brethren, must not be carnal: steadfast continuance in prayer and supplication for the fullest outpouring that can be given

us of the Spirit's quickening influences, is the first that I would name; and if we believe the Lord Jesus, he has given the strongest assurance that they shall not be petitioned for in vain. As a part of this, and as the spring of this, we should seriously consider and deeply mourn, the utter defeat which our present scattered state brings, to the great triumph of Satan, upon the design of God in publishing the Gospel of his grace. Once more, I charge you to fix the most observant eye upon that design; it was to plant in the midst of this miserable world which lieth in the wicked one, and in deep death unto God, without knowledge of his will, without love of his will, without power to perform his will, holy families and societies, endued and sealed and stamped by the Spirit of promise with all that knowledge, love, and power; with whom and in whom God himself should personally be related unto them, precisely as the soul is unto the body, so that his mighty presence ever seen and ever felt should in each individual inspire, and form, and fashion all the meditations of his heart, all the words of his mouth, all the works of his hands; yea, every thought, word, and deed be led captive to the obedience of Christ, who thus, *simply because he should be seen*, should mould his brethren into conformity with himself, and impress on their souls the image of his heavenly Father; should create every gracious movement, and chain down every deadly lust, till every look, tone, and gesture should be fraught with Christ and redolent of heaven: even as the sun, solely because he stands in the firmament, doth hold the worlds in their stations and motions; and doth impart to all things in them

both life and beauty. Brethren, this also is faith; faith, mark it well, is the perpetual inshining of God upon the soul; this also is to walk in the light: light means nothing more than God, for "God is light." And as he that walks in the day, is conscious of the day, is conscious that he orders every step aright by the light of day, knows the name and nature of every outward object that meets his view, and is disposed towards them accordingly; so the spiritual man is translated into a region of heavenly light whereof the fulness of the Godhead laid up in Christ is itself the unclouded and unsetting sun, and he sees it, and ever blesses it, for he is warmed and illumined, and gladdened and beautified by it; it becomes to him the inward principle and the outward element of his existence; he lives in it, and it lives in him, so all his soul is turned into light and love. For love, as I was before saying, is the effect of light; he sees every thing and every person made beautiful in the light as well as himself, and therefore cannot choose but love it. The mystery of the saints' oneness, is this; nothing being capable of producing genuine love, but that which is truly good and beautiful; and none being such but God only, He first draws out their love by showing them himself in Christ, and then, by transforming each into his own likeness, in virtue solely of that manifestation, draws out love to himself a second time in one another; so that he causes a thousand living mirrors to reflect his own beauty and brightness; and so that a spiritual world is created, which is as exactly, and far more excellently, what the material world hath been said to be, "but the varied God." And this oneness meant to exist in a church is no other than that which exists between the persons of the blessed

Trinity itself, and which our Saviour in John xvii. so wonderfully prays that his own may fully experience; for there, as it is God loving God, so with the saints; first they love God in himself, and then, as imaged forth in one another; which evidently resolves itself again into God loving God. Just as the sun is in himself glorious and attracts our admiration; and as again he is glorious and attracts admiration when the blaze of his beams is embodied and softened in the gem and in the flower. Think then, I say, that those who in their own nature are hateful and hated of one another, should be redeemed into the love and oneness of the very Godhead itself; think of this and marvel, and learn to magnify the plenteous redemption that is with Christ, and thirst to realize it. But when I wandered into this digression, I was urging our plain obligation to do so, and I was tempted to enlarge once more on the unspeakable riches of God's purpose in the Gospel of his Son, in order that a just sense of the grievous forfeiture we sustain by its frustration being wrought in us, we might be hence stirred up to all fervency and frequency of effectual prayer and supplication for its full accomplishment. For prayer is the very test of spiritual strength, and evinces, beyond every other proof, the manhood of a saint. I believe that to serve God, like Anna, night and day with fastings and prayers, displays greater perfection of holiness than if a man should outdo the labours, perils, and hardships of Paul. How strongly is this marked in the case of the Apostles; when, being yet carnal, they were with the Lord in the garden, they could not watch and pray with him one hour; when endued from on high with the spirit of grace and supplication, in prayer, perse-

vering, effectual, fervent prayer, they all with one accord continued. Therefore let each man examine himself, and convict himself of deep deficiency in that sweetest office of constant and earnest intercession for all saints ; and chiefly let it grieve him at the heart that they do not better know how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

But, brethren, something else than our prayers, even something that shall evidence the sincerity of our prayers, will, I speak it unflinchingly, be called for. Brethren, whosoever among us is held in a corrupt, secularized, and carnal system, no matter what, so the Spirit is not in it as a body, and so it was not originally brought together by the Spirit ; for I take the Lord to witness that I am not now actuated by partiality, but that I consider one system just as worthless as another ; in this situation whosoever values the glory of Christ, and counts it his meat and drink to do the will and to keep the commandments of Christ, is bound to act on one of two alternatives ; either the system must become a spiritual one, or he must renounce the system, and that not without a decided protest against it as a false one. He must give himself to the Lord, brethren : I have done it myself as far as it was in my power, and (I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not) have had clearer, surer, and more abundant experiences since of his favour than I ever had in my life before ; and while He is with me, I will not care though the whole world be against me ; nor will I cease calling on every saint to pray he may receive equal grace and equal light to do the same : though God forbid I should exhort him to take that or any other step, till the Spirit open his

eyes, and take him by the hand, and lead him away. For how was it in the system to which I belonged? in our assemblies, to which the majority resorted merely through custom, or for the sake of form, we all prayed God not to take his Holy Spirit from us; but was there then the Holy Spirit to take away? verily *that* was a prayer at any rate susceptible of an alteration more to the purpose; for if I can be confident of anything on earth, I am confident of this, that in regard to any power of his presence, he had already long been absent from our church congregations. On that however I will not dwell: admitting readily, that some there were in whom he had a place, though I am sure not richly in outward manifestation, was it not sorely to his dishonour that such should mix themselves up, in the most indiscriminate way, with the rest, and so both parties join together in a prayer that he might not be taken from them, as if he dwelt alike in all, and indeed fully sanctioning the idea that it was so? Could it be pleasing to the Holy One of Israel that no difference should thus be put between the clean and the unclean, between flesh and spirit, between the earthly-minded and the heavenly-minded? Tell me, I beseech you, tell me, how it was not the plainest violation of that positive charge and strict injunction delivered to the saints, "that they look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble them, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." And now that I have thus been naturally led to the subject, I testify most solemnly, that of that holy discipline, *essential* to the

church, no less approving itself to the light of nature, than expressly instituted by the Lord Christ and his Apostles, the saints are unaccountably forgetful and scandalously negligent; I further testify against them, that men of the world are infinitely more prompt in expelling from *their* society a cowardly or dishonourable person, than they, the saints of Christ, are prompt to set the prescribed mark of avoidance on one who shows himself unworthy to be their associate. And God, I firmly believe, designs the practice of the world as a witness against them. Easy the task would be of multiplying instances beyond the one adverted to, that I might approve myself clear in what I have done; but that is not my present purpose. This only comment I will further add on the subject, that it was great unfaithfulness towards the souls of unconverted men, thus to encourage them in the presumption that they, to an equal extent with them that are sanctified, had received an unction from the Holy One: and I moreover say, generally, that by careless acquiescence in our present state we are withholding from the world that testimony of the Spirit *through* the church, ordained to work the triple conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgement; so that the world, both seeing and hating both us and our Father, should have no cloke for their sin. I repeat it, both us and our Father; for as Christ is so are we: He was the Son of God, and we are the sons of God; he was the light of the world, and we are the lights of the world; he knew all things, and we know all things: they could not tell whence *he* came and whither *he* went; and he that is spiritual is discerned of no man, for the Spirit that begat him is as the wind that bloweth where it listeth, whereof none

can say from whence *it* cometh, and whither *it* goeth. I again, therefore, tell a saint, that in belonging merely to a system of flesh, he belongs to nothing at all, and is walking most disorderly; so let him pray that he may receive mercy, and that God will count him worthy to be emancipated quickly from it. For any formal and professed association with what is such, will produce the sure effect of casting the mind into a congenial mould, fixing on it a peculiar bent, and communicating a settled tincture and complexion to it; so that in a mind thus conditioned and disposed the keenness of its spiritual apprehension will inevitably suffer such abatement as shall rob it of the power to try and to discern "things that differ," and "to approve them" where they "are excellent." It will see every thing through the medium of its system.

But more than this—although a detached state will avail to free us from the cramping, insidious, and withering influence of a carnal system, we shall by no means find this enough to further and complete our edification; and it is with the ulterior view of promoting the positive establishment of a sound one, yea, in order to it, that we should take the course insisted on.

For not only withdrawal from a state of things which is wrong, but actual removal also into one which is right, is requisite, if you would have *the mind* completely *right*. A natural man will tell us of the force that circumstances, favourable or unfavourable, exert in the formation of human character;—much more doth the only wise God know that a spiritual man can breathe freely and walk at large, and increase with His own increase in a spiritual system only. Therefore

ordained he at the beginning, that his children, wherever they were, should be knit together, "in one body:" why? unto the "edifying of that body in love." For this let a man most assuredly know, that the term "edification" hath respect unto *societies* of saints, and unto *them only*; and to suppose it possible that we *can* be reaping any solid edification in our existing state, is a supposition utterly absurd on two accounts: first, because saintly societies are alone the means of this, and no such societies are now in being; and, secondly, because if any material edification *were* enjoyed by us, its very first effect would be to manifest itself in the instant setting up of such societies. For, I ask you,—what is the meaning of this word we take so frequently into our mouths? is it not the process and result of "*building up*?" Now then, can it be said of single stones lying scattered and severed, solitary and insulated, not laid together and taking any regular and comely shape and figure, not made to confess the hand of the architect, that they are either yet built up, or are in course of building up? No; neither, brethren, is the term "edification" predicable of us.

Is it even so? is a church the house, the living temple of God; and is it now every where lying in ruins? Then shall I use an empty figure of speech, or a mere fanciful analogy, if I implore you to be of David's mind, when "he swore unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids, *until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.*"

And if, again, (while I am equally earnest in reminding you, that "except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it,") I bid you think with yourselves that you even hear your God speaking to you, as he spake of old to his people Israel by the prophet Haggai, saying, "This people say, the time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. Then came the word of the Lord, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your walled houses, *and this house lie waste?* Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much and bring in little: ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; consider your ways. *Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord.* Ye looked for much, and lo it came to little; and when ye brought it home I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. *Because of mine house that is waste,* and ye run every man unto *his own* house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands. Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, *obeyed the voice of the Lord their God,*

and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the Lord. *Then spake Haggai, the Lord's messenger, in the Lord's message, unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord.*"

Brethren, I have quoted more perhaps, in quoting this passage thus at length, than you may judge can be made applicable to the matter in hand; but by the grace of God I mean to show that you would be wrong in judging thus. Heavy judgments of drought and famine are here declared to have been the consequences which the people, by their inattention to what God deemed of primary concernment, entailed upon themselves: it is of this I speak. Brethren, let *us* consider *our* ways, and let us see whether *we* have not been visited with a drought and a famine more afflicting to the soul of a saint than any by which the flesh alone is punished. Was there ever a time then, brethren, when grace was so extremely low, and so faintly visible, when the savour of Christ so scantily rested on men, and gave out so little of its fragrance, life, and gladness? Suffer me a while to hold up the glass of God's word, that in it we may scan and censure our own features. What do we know "of being filled with the Spirit, of rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory, of the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us, of being made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; of singing and making melody *in our hearts* to the Lord, of teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; of our speech being alway with grace, seasoned with salt, and ministering grace

to the hearers ; of glorying in tribulations, of joying in God, and in the peace of God which passeth all understanding ; of having our life hid with Christ in God, of dying daily, of Christ living in us, so that we live, yet not we, for we are crucified with Christ ; of rejoicing evermore, of praying without ceasing, of having our conversation in heaven, of continuing in the Son and in the Father, of watching unto prayer with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, and of being careful for nothing, because we have at all times ready access unto the Father, to whom by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, our requests are to be made known ?” How far are we sensible of being “ come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel ?” how far are we “ a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, showing forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light ?” Light ! Light in the Lord ! Brethren, are not many of us gloom, and heaviness, and sorrow in the Lord ; and if sorrow is an unholy thing, and forbidden as an unholy thing to the high priest under the law, are not many of us, instead of living witnesses to the riches of the grace of God, just on the other hand but so many practical profanations of his holy name ? And looking around this

dreary waste, mourning over this cheerless prospect of spiritual barrenness, how can we close our eyes against the fact, that "the heaven over us is stayed from dew," the dew of the Holy Ghost, "and the earth is stayed from her fruit," the fruit of joy, peace, and righteousness in that Holy Ghost.

At the bottom of all this there must exist some deep and widely-working cause: the notion long hath gained acceptance and currency that the influences of the Spirit naturally ebb and flow, that his agency is precarious, fluctuating, and uneven, that frequent and enduring seasons of coldness and deadness are quite consistent with the title of a man to his being called "spiritual:" the Lord enable his servant, by opening the truth of his word, to refute so pernicious a heresy.

In the 14th chapter of John, and in the 23rd verse, it is written, "If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." I do not attempt to expatiate on the wonder of love this promise contains, all my thoughts sink under it; yea, there is that in it which fast silences the conceptions of my heart as they arise, and essay to magnify duly such stupendous redemption; yea, I see that the adoration which these things claim is a mute and speechless one. What I now have to do, is to lay bare the full import and efficacy of those words, "and make our abode with him." And surely a little fair attention will, without much difficulty, succeed in fully doing it. Should it not seem, then, that the term "abode" was expressly chosen to instill, beyond the possibility of understanding it any other way, the idea of *constancy*, *continuance*, and

permanency? Doth it not aim, I say, at something that standeth in glorious contradistinction to that which is spoken in Jeremiah: "O the hope of Israel, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man *that turneth aside to tarry for a night.*" O my brethren, what know we of this marvellous atonement, in its life and power, its truth and fulness, what know we of our spirits being the mansion of an indwelling God; and why is not our peace abiding as a rock, and abounding as an ocean? For let me appeal to what is written in the book of the old covenant, by way of throwing fresh light and fresh assurance on what we are now considering out of the new: there I read that, "Thus saith the high and holy One, that inhabiteth eternity: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one." Well then; he dwelleth with the heart of the humble and contrite as he dwelleth in the high and holy place:—doth he dwell habitually in the high and holy place? then dwelleth he as habitually in the heart of the humble and contrite; doth he dwell blessedly in the high and holy place? then blessedly in the heart of the humble and contrite; doth he make perpetual light around him in the high and holy place? then maketh he perpetual light around him in the heart of the humble and contrite.

Brethren, it is as unutterably sweet to listen to this promise, as it is sad to think how woefully in practice we fall short of it; and if it indeed sounds precious in your ear, you will spare no pains to ascertain what malignant influence so cursedly counteracts

the fulness of its accomplishment. *The unsearchable riches of this promise, brethren, are found in company with a condition.* At that word be not offended. I know that the conditions which grace requires, grace itself performs. *But I know equally well, that when the children of God grow careless and negligent to understand that will of God which the conditions annexed to his promises discover, and consequently omit to implore grace that they may be qualified to execute them, it is a righteous thing with God to let the condition go unperformed, and the promise unenjoyed.* Now the condition in the passage under consideration is, “that a man love Christ and keep his words;” and the Father of mercies and of light be with us while we endeavour to fetch out the full meaning that lies couched under this simple expression, to establish firmly and exhibit fully that precise position the saints ought to occupy, if they would fain partake the inestimable blessing here pledged upon it.

First, it will be granted me, that to “keep Christ’s words” is the same thing as to keep “Christ’s commandment;” and it will with equal readiness be granted me, that Christ hath himself explained the end of that commandment to be love: “These things *I command you*, that ye love one another;” and, “This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.” Mark that latter clause well; the saints are to love one another as Christ loved them; and John, in his Epistle, accordingly affirms that, because he laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Further than this, Christ sets forth this love in another yet more wonderful form, by praying

the Father that his disciples 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 the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be *one*, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be *made perfect in one*; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Now, with reference to this love, there are two points for our consideration; its origin and its tendency. And again, in connection with its origin, there are two, namely, the agency concerned in its origin and the result of that agency: I shall begin with the latter. In this, the first effect produced on the understanding of the regenerate man is a sight of God's love to his soul in Christ; and this is, singly, the most beautiful object of contemplation in the universe. This is what our Father Abraham rejoiced to see, what many kings and prophets desired to see, what the angels desire to look into, what to the principalities and powers in heavenly places makes known the manifold wisdom of God. But such being the superlative loveliness of the object, the affection it excites must proportionably transcend every other affection: this is one result. There is yet another: the perfection of beauty thus unveiled before him, the man will infallibly become identified with that which he contemplates, and be what he beholds; as it is written, "we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," or, as below, "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*" But again, and as infallibly, the same

image when it meets his view in another, made partaker of the same heavenly calling, will bear the same precious fruits, and as before his soul went streaming out in all the closing unity of love towards God in Christ, so now, in like manner, towards God in Christ, and in his brother. Now, brethren, need I say it, as the heaven is high above the earth, so is this love far beyond any that the ties of nature yield; they all shall decay, but this is permanent, like its object, and as intense as permanent; and every reason had our Lord to entitle them in whom this love should dwell, an hundred fold more brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children. And being such in its nature, brethren, (which leads me to the second point of enquiry,) it can be produced by no other agency than by the eternal Spirit;—shall ought on earth, shall all on earth be sufficient for it? Shall human power, human wisdom, human eloquence command it? Nay, verily, not by might, nor by power, not by the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts. Then, as we were to consider this oneness in its origin, so in its tendency. Brethren, if schemes of interest, ambition, or pleasure, can draw the men of the earth into compact and energetic union, can in them raise a spirit of steady and efficient cooperation; if there are occasions on which friends and kinsmen, who are so but according to the flesh, can exhibit the liveliest tokens of mutual affection and awakened sympathy; if the flush of welcome can brighten their countenances, if they can dissolve into tears of joy, and rush into each other's arms; how should not they, for whose sakes the Son sanctified himself and laid down his life as for his friends, how should

not they be banded together into the closest state of holy brotherhood! even the state that Christ prescribed, the state concerning which Christ prayed his Father that it might be ours, the state that the Apostles made it all their labour to uphold, the state to which their epistles, that portion of Scripture we justly regard as *our* peculiar property, alone apply.

Suffer me now to remind you, brethren, that I commenced this portion of my subject with asserting the necessary existence of a cause rooted deeply and operating extensively for our supine, unfruitful, and frequently distressing condition; that I have shown that cause, I have shown how Christ promised *that* which should render any other condition impossible than the most joyful and glorious one; but that that promise, by its terms, was to be realized only under certain circumstances, circumstances which it neither is nor hath ever been sufficiently our care to maintain, and that therefore we are *as* we are. With all humility, but boldly, solemnly, and distinctly, I call on every saint throughout the kingdom, to labour might and main *the reproduction of those circumstances*; and I aver, that if after reading this testimony, he makes any other object his primary or exclusive pursuit, he is guilty of contemning the unquestionable mind of Christ.

I adverted above to the Epistles.—Brethren, we may almost shut them up and have done with them, for circumstanced as we are, they are literally no longer in strictness applicable to us; they are written to particular churches of faithful brethren, called together and sanctified by the Spirit, waiting for the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, yea, looking for and

hasting unto the coming of the day of God. But show me one such now, show it to me; that with praises and songs of thanksgiving to my God, I may make speed and join myself unto it. In those Epistles, exhortations are earnest and frequent to "continue in grace;" indeed it may be said at once that this is the main scope and substance of all; for to this their copious dissertations on the use and abuse of the law, its insufficiency to justify or sanctify, and the consequent inconsistency of combining law with gospel; to this their heavy denunciations against Jewish seducers; their inculcating so earnestly high sanctification, and the practice of holy discipline and brotherly love, preserving unity; to this in fine the zealous anxiety they display in enforcing the maintenance of all good works, evidently tend. And in thus exhorting the churches to "continue in grace," they merely took up and echoed that all-important injunction of our Lord at parting with his disciples, to "abide in him." But what is grace? grace is simply God's *manifestation of himself* in love to the soul of the sinner; God puts away judgment and *gives himself to be seen* of his fallen creatures; and seeing God suffices, the creature that moment becomes holy, happy, and excellent: therefore John, after affirming that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," immediately subjoins, No man *hath seen God* at any time, the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father *he hath declared him*. Now I have already established the principle, that genuine church societies result barely and solely from many participating, through the Spirit, in such manifestations; and what does the disappearance of the result mark but the

absence of the principle? The apostolical Epistles, then, brethren, are in two respects inapplicable to us; they speak of an external condition no longer in formal existence; and they also speak of internal principles originating that condition, into which we are utterly incapable of entering with the cordiality of an experimental recognition:—brethren, the apostolical Epistles no longer apply to us. And, brethren, it is other epistles you must read, it is other epistles you must be roused with, even such epistles, as he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, writes unto dying churches, bidding them to repent, and to remember whence they are fallen, and to do the first works; to strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die: or else he will come unto them quickly, and fight against them with the sword of his mouth. Mark it well, that each of Apocalyptic Epistles begins thus, “I know thy *works*.” works are that on which the great Bishop of souls hath his eye; according to them he loves or hates, punishes or rewards. Now I affirm it fearlessly, these works are such as can be performed in pure and spiritual societies only; they are works of faith, they are fruits of love, they are the heavenly acts of unspeakable kindness, tenderness, and affection which God’s children living together, as any other family ought to live, far more as God’s family ought to live, feel, exercise, and display towards each other. It follows, that while there is nothing of which we talk more commonly than good works, the state in which we live is necessarily destitute of such, a state the original production of which the neglect of them occa-

sioned, and which in turn occasions their continued neglect. For, brethren, often as I have found occasion to enforce and to reiterate this principle, I will once more repeat it.—God alone is good, and works alone are good as they flow from love to him, and to what is like him; but he cannot be loved without being seen, and he cannot be seen without the working of that mighty power wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places; he cannot be seen without the inworking of the Spirit, he cannot continue to be seen without the indwelling of the Spirit; and that inworking and indwelling cannot be without producing that oneness in the saints *which alone God values because it is that alone which glorifies God, alone testifies to the world the headship of Christ at his own right hand, alone testifies that God did ever send him.* That oneness in the saints I say, which is the charter of all their privileges, and the bond of all perfection, which is the acme of the glory, and the fulness of the riches of the redemption that Christ redeemed them with; that oneness, which is in heaven, and which maketh heaven; for angels and archangels, and seraphim and cherubim are one with each other because they are one with God; and the saints on earth are one with each other because they are one with God; one with God and one through Christ, who is head over all things to the Church. Amen. See then, brethren, in how many ways the same result is brought out upon us; unto this Christ's prayers *for* you, unto this his precepts *to* you tend: hear him in the Gospel, and hear him in the Apocalypse; hear him before he was led away to the

cross, and hear him when walking in glory, and you ever hear the same; he entreats you with the earnestness of a dying friend, and he commands you with the authority of a sovereign Lord, to be one.

And now who among us thinks of this, who layeth it to heart, who is anxious for the saints to glorify God by their professed subjection to his holy rule of walking in brotherhood and oneness, who is interceding on their behalf with prayers and tears, day and night, that God in his great mercy will let it once more be so with them? Alas! our eyes seem to be turned in any direction but this; and this, as it is a call the most imperative and the most obligatory of any, so is it of every thing besides the root and basis. We are fighting for doctrines—forgetting that a church, a pure church, is alone “the pillar and ground of truth,” that the truth produces a church, and a church in turn preserves the truth, just as ballast steadies the ship, and the ship contains the ballast; that such a church is composed of individuals, each of whom comprehends the *whole* counsel of God, and hath received an unction from the Holy One, and knoweth all things: and forgetting that in such a church, in case any difference of sentiments did exist, dispute and argument would never be resorted to, for they would not even occur to a spiritual mind; no, they would remember it was written “if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you;” and they would pray and wait. For God never designed articles and confessions and canons to be “the pillar and ground of truth:” no, he designed the hearts of those in whom “the truth” should dwell, the hearts of those whom it should “set

free," to be its better shrine, its living receptacle. And he designed that every such heart should be in possession of his whole counsel. And great is the mistake that saintly love and union are to be obtained by mutually forbearing to press important articles on which brethren differ. Satan's artifice! On the contrary, fervent should be our prayers for each to receive that unction from the Holy One which teacheth *all* things, that a complete concurrence in doctrine may produce complete unity. Otherwise, such meagre sympathy, as for example, holding only justification by faith in common, will display a proportionate result of loose and lukewarm charity.

Again, we are fighting for gifts, some coveting and some despising them; it hath been shown, brethren, both from reasoning and from facts, that God will never honour the lower testimony to his name above the higher; and that as surely as love is nobler than power, so surely shall the church be a miracle of love ere a miracle of power.

Again, how many of us have respect exclusively unto evangelical service, forgetting how important and how desirable it would be, that such service should be carried on in association with a spiritual church, ever cooperating in prayer at home with those who were teaching the Gospel abroad. "And now, Lord, grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word," is the prayer of the Jewish church in Acts. "Pray for me," says Paul to the Ephesian church, "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak." And

to the Colossian, " Pray for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds ; that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak." And to the Thessalonian, " Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified." But is it according to the mind of Christ that we should thus concern ourselves with those exclusively that are without, totally neglecting our own edification, and the edification of the brethren ? I am sure it is not ; I am sure it was his solemn and thrice repeated injunction to Peter, that he should *feed his sheep* : I am sure that the gifts he gave to men when he ascended up on high and led captivity captive, were prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, " for the *perfecting* of the *saints*, for the work of the ministry, *for the edifying of the body of Christ* : " I am sure that he pronounces that wise and faithful servant blessed, whom, made by him ruler *over his household*, his lord when he cometh shall find *giving them their meat in due season*. And here I must say that I do not comprehend at all under this dispensation, that is, the dispensation of the Spirit, a system of evangelizing which precludes the full and glorious operation of that Spirit, that operation by which he calls them that are sanctified into *holy societies*, *holy* because called together in love ; for they cannot be called together in love, without being called at the same time out of the world, and that is here separation from the world, and that makes them holy. What is the literal meaning of " ecclesia," the original word for " church ? " " an assembly called together "— but in what manner " called ? " *verily by the pure*

agency of the Spirit; so that whatever is founded on any other principle, whatever is brought together or kept together by any other influence, is not a church. But I say, he that evangelizes without a view of gathering his converts into such a church, disregards half the mandate of his Lord. "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe *all things whatsoever I have commanded you*, and lo I am with you alway, *even unto the end of the world.*" Brethren, *the end of the world is now at hand*, and he unto whom all power is given in heaven and in earth will *still* be with us: *and if we would but go forth, as go we might, in entire and simple faith in this assurance, steadfastly determined on executing the mission to its full extent, great things should be the result.* But as it is, we do *not* set out in implicit confidence, we do *not* go whither the Spirit only guides our feet, and refraining where he forbids us, we do not speak only as the Spirit opens our mouths; we set out hastily, weak and unripe in faith, but little if at all gifted with spiritual utterance, knowing nothing, and perhaps not allowing, of the Spirit's distinct and special call, and of being separated unto the work with fasting and prayer, and the laying on of hands, even as Paul and Barnabas were separated. We set out in haste because the restlessness of the flesh will not let patience have her perfect work, nor let us sit still till the Lord God Almighty reveals himself in the plenitude of his all-sufficiency to our souls: the thought of our hearts is, that we will buy more grace of him than at present we have, by hiring ourselves to be his servants. But, brethren, is that

victory of our faith which overcometh the world, nothing? is the thorough engrafting of those stupendous principles whereby the man is made a new being and lifted into a new sphere of existence, nothing? those principles, which are the soul of the new Adam dispensation, whereby a man is dead to the world, dead to self, to every wish of self, though the dearest and least blameable, so that he lives a life hidden in Christ with God and unto God? Is all this, I say, nothing? doth not God value this, unless a man is engaged in outward ministerial service? Yet hear how Peter proposes we should go about to render ourselves acceptable: "giving all diligence add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." No mention here of evangelizing. Brethren, growth in grace is a work of time; Christ is not fully formed within us, not perfectly developed in limb and lineament, all at once. Could we but wait for this, how much more easy, delightful, and effectual should we find our labour! the image of Christ being visibly displayed in our persons, the elect would come out and gather around us, almost, as it were, by the simple force of natural attraction. Brethren, the consequence of our impatience and precipitancy is, we can only preach a John the Baptist's preaching, such as our Lord himself preached, and such as his Apostles, when he

was yet with them in the flesh: that is, we make no difference in our mode of preaching the kingdom of heaven *before* it was set up and *after* it was set up: strange to say, we preach the gospel of the kingdom, perhaps without even mentioning the kingdom at all, or, if we mention it, it is but a name, a sound in the preacher's mouth and in men's ears; we can no where point to it as *palpably realized*: I say, that *after* Christ has purchased for us the power of the Spirit, to vivify and embody the wonderful principles of the heavenly kingdom, we can neither point to any system wherein they are already so embodied, nor do we intend to raise any up, wherein they shall be so. But oh! how sweeter far was the office of the Evangelist, how more effective far his labours, if every conversion of a soul were the adding to the family of God a new member, whom the weeping congratulations of heavenly love should welcome into its bosom! and how grateful and how reviving would it be to the spirit of that Evangelist, when discouraged by the coldness, or grieved by the hardheartedness, or troubled by the anger of them who should reject his message, to fall back upon his church, and repairing his strength by the sweet communion of the saints, return with recruited energies to new attempts! For it must not be dissembled, that exclusive employment in evangelical or desultory service, the viewing the effects of truth, chiefly in its application to the carnal mind, hath by no means an edifying tendency; that tendency, on the other hand, greatly needs to be counteracted by viewing its unimpeded results richly and refreshingly manifested in those that are maturely spiritual. And

here I cannot but take the opportunity of saying with extreme grief of heart that the social intercourse of the saints was never less calculated to promote mutual edification than in the present time ; and the reason is, because in each the image of Christ is so little apparent : brethren, there is that broad and habitual secularity in our demeanour that holds down that image, and that must be gotten rid of. I know one, to whom this happened : he had, during a period of seclusion from all company, cultivated close and assiduous communion with God only ; and he could not but be sensible that, as a consequence of this, a deep savour of holiness rested in him and on him. But when circumstances threw him again into the world, though he was more than ever studious to consort with those only who were held to be advanced professors of the faith, he found it notwithstanding impossible to retain fully the outward traces of the sanctity which solitude had earned him, but was quickly pulled down again, in spite of himself, to the worldly tone that pervaded the manners and conversation of those around him. Now such instances may serve to show us how much we are in want of pastors and teachers to build us up. Merely delivering the message of the Gospel and then to have done, is, in comparison, an easy task. Peter and the other Apostles, while yet carnal, could do as much ; but Peter must undergo Satan's fiercest winnowing, to prove his faith unshaken and his conversion complete, before he could "*strengthen his brethren.*" And let me say, I have several in my eye for whom the strengthening of their brethren would be a most suitable task, and who are, in a considerable measure, wasting their gifts on

the exercise of an irregular and indefinite ministry, partly evangelical, partly pastoral, corresponding with which none appears from the New Testament to have been ordained by the Apostles.

Again, the church hath lately been raised to a sense of her deficiency, in the matter of entire devotedness as to worldly substance ; but such devotedness can have a right place and due direction only among the members of a spiritual church : an isolated case here and there will not produce a strong impression in the minds of men ; and the same lukewarmness that keeps us in a scattered state, will forbid the more frequent occurrence of similar instances. A readiness to distribute, in the highest degree cheerful, unsparing, and habitual, pervading a whole community, could not fail to be considered a moral miracle ; but here again it would flow from the love that originally formed that community. In the fourth of Acts, the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul, and then it comes that they had all things common.

Again, and lastly, all will allow that it is the part of a saint to testify against every evil practice of the world whenever it comes in his way ; but his power as an individual to acquit himself with boldness in this arduous warfare would be found far greater if he could feel that many were engaged as well as he in fighting the same good fight, banded with him in the fellowship that God approves, and with him sharing the persecution such faithfulness never faileth to draw down. And here I would take occasion to remark how utterly we seem to have lost all our command over the *consciences* of men when ordinary conversation furnishes an

opportunity of testifying Christ, and discoursing on the things of God. I mean to say, that we are in the habit of betaking ourselves to argument, and so of doing that which too much appears like standing on the defensive, rather than of commending ourselves to their inmost souls by weighty manifestation of the truth. We seem to decline taking any high ground of Gospel experience, such for instance as the indwelling of the Godhead in the children of light; because, I fear, in doing so we could not speak that we do *know*, nor testify that we have *seen*. Further, brethren, on this head; so strongly doth the existing state of things demand our very loudest testimony, such a world of antichristian principles and practices prevail around us, and have received the sanction of established usage, that well persuaded am I we quite fail of adequately conceiving our utter backwardness and deficiency in this respect; and it proves our dwindled, low, and narrow apprehensions of the truth, it proves how little we care to apply it in the full sweep of its utmost range and efficacy. As little, brethren, do we conceive of the fiery persecution an apostate world would pour upon the saints if we bore such witness as became us against every part of its apostasy, if we drove the ploughshare of the word over every noxious and unprofitable weed which God had not planted. Nevertheless, blessed in its effects would such persecution surely be; and nothing would give us that calm strength of spirit, and that steady clearness of apprehension necessary to fit us for the testimony that would excite it, than purifying ourselves from those flagitious systems, called by a prodigious lie, churches, and coming in the might

and light of God, altogether out of them; those systems, I say, which hold us down and hold the truth of God down, and blind our understandings beyond any thing besides to the brightness and power and fulness of that truth. "Yea, if a man purge himself from these he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." This I likewise say, that I do not see how such a segregation could fail to be the inevitable result, if the saints, some how or other, were not content to take no notice of that plain and positive charge delivered to them by their Lord through his Apostle Paul, namely, to "look diligently lest there be any profane person among them." Now observe, it is not one who commits gross and overt acts of sin that is spoken of, but one *generally* profane, one, that is, whose life evinces not the influence of the truth, whose conversation yet betrays an unsanctified conscience. This cool and persevering disregard of a precept equally plain, solemn, and important, let those, I say again, whom it concerneth, explain and excuse. Verily, brethren, acting as we continue to act, anything are we but those tormenting prophets spoken of in the most mysterious chapter of the Apocalypse, who tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

Thus then, of all that is spiritual in operation and mighty in effect, a pure and evangelical church must be laid as the sole foundation, that is, a church gathered together and gathered from amidst the world by the mighty hand and stretched out arm of God, sanctified in Christ Jesus and calling on his name, *coming behind in no gift*, and waiting for the revelation of the day of God:

And why, brethren, why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should *raise the dead*? I know that time and custom have habituated and reconciled us to every species of negligence and confusion; that reformation, uncompromising, primitive, apostolic reformation, it hath become our wisdom to regard as a chimera. I know that we consider those early days, when God was glorified in the firm establishment and free course of his truth, when the crowned and quivered warrior on the white horse went forth conquering and to conquer, as the blaze and beauty of a meteor, that briefly flashed upon the world, and was then extinguished to leave it in perpetual darkness. But why? again, I ask. As long as there are individual believers in the world, there are principles in it capable of forming the purest church that could be desired. I am quite aware, indeed, that it is only in remote embryo they may so exist; I am aware that that seed of God which remaineth in the regenerate, hath its power only in its capability of being acted on immediately by God, and of acting with him and according to his will; as also that, if left to itself, it is easily liable to be weakened, oppressed, and overborne by the flesh and other causes. But then, I am equally aware that it contains the germ of all, and of the highest graces; and all that is necessary to make them flourish abundantly is, that we neglect not the gift of God that is in us, that we stir up the gift of God that is in us. Why should it be thought a thing incredible? "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them:" but then they must be gathered together with the

power of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, by the Spirit : now this relates not, as is commonly supposed, merely to the casual meeting of two or three brethren for prayer ; no, it relates to two or three powerfully drawn towards each other, and drawn out of the world, and fixed therefore in a state of permanent and conspicuous union. And this exposition of the place I confirm by reference to the context, where it will be found that it immediately follows the institution of church discipline. Here is an animating consideration ! The Lord Christ so highly prized and earnestly desired the formation of a church, *the oneness of which should testify to the world that the Father had sent him*, that he will not have men discouraged from endeavouring to raise it on the slenderest beginnings and the narrowest basis. Why should it seem a thing incredible ? Why do we not build the house of the Lord ? While there are saints in the world we cannot be at a loss for materials, and while we have the word of God we cannot want a rule. Is the Lord's hand shortened at all ? No, brethren, that hopeless look of acquiescence in the impossibility of their revival, which the early days of the Gospel never fail to be regarded with, only speaks *our* want of faith and *our* decay of love. It proves really that and nothing else, it shows nothing as it *is*, but as it is *thought* to be ; instead of demonstrating the thing itself to be impracticable, it doth only demonstrate it to be most necessary and desireable, because it demonstrates that low degree of spirituality, to which an abandonment of the means that God ordained for our edification hath reduced us. Besides, no one can say that the arm of the Lord hath never been revealed since, in

such a way as during the Apostles' days, to manifest the power and prosper the progress of his truth: (I will pass over other instances;) there is now lying before me a narrative describing an effusion of the Spirit, which happened within the last hundred years, wonderful, I scruple not to aver, as any which attended the preaching of Peter or of Paul. And who shall dare to say, in contradiction to what the Lord himself hath said, that such might not now be? The Lord hath said, and in the strongest manner, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him." I fear, I greatly fear, that in framing our petitions for this the most excellent of gifts, we rather have an eye to personal salvation and personal sanctification, than to the glory of God, that his glory may be made to appear in that sublime oneness of heart and mind which the Spirit, acting in the full freedom of its energy, delights to exhibit. This, then, should be the object of our prayers for the Spirit; and further than this, as I have said before, if we are connected with any system which, by its constitution or practice, fetters the influences and operations of the Spirit, we should, to demonstrate our sincerity, leave it. For instance, the Spirit is a Spirit of holiness, the holy Spirit; and where holy discipline is neglected, he will surely not long continue. "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Now is it not clear from this, that the right administration of discipline is a very principal use to which it is expected, and here suggested, that the

possession of the Spirit should be applied? as if it had been said, I give you the Spirit, to make you holy and blessed by bringing the power and presence of God among you; unspeakable, matchless gift! Take heed that you secure the continuance of it, by employing it aright and as it is meant to be employed, by putting away every one that is unclean from among you; and if you faithfully execute this ordinance, such power and authority shall attend it, that every decree passed and executed on earth shall be registered and ratified in heaven. So we see how the Spirit is equally essential to discipline, and discipline again to the Spirit. On the one hand, to solemnize an act of discipline rightly, the church must be gathered together with the power of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, which is none other than the Spirit of Christ: and the severe sentence must be pronounced and be received in the same power, deeply felt by either party; severe indeed, but not unaccompanied with many tears and groans of love from all present for the poor sinful soul who is the subject of it; on the other hand, as the Spirit was given for the due enforcement of discipline, so that due enforcement is itself but a means to a further end, namely, the due preservation in the one, but many-membered body of that very Spirit which animates the members of that body to observe it diligently, and enables them to execute it effectively. But, brethren, to resume,—the Spirit rejoices to display his manifold power in diversity of gifts, ministries, and operations, dividing to every man severally as he will; if then we belong to any such system, so ordered that it prevents the Spirit thus profusely and variously putting himself forth; if, for ex-

ample, one man only is authorized to pray or otherwise to edify the flock, and that perhaps only in a musty, fusty written form, or as much in the flesh, though *not* in such a form, whereas it is the mind of the Spirit that in the assemblies of the saints (O beautiful and glorious assemblies, in the midst whereof standeth the Lord Jesus and his attentive angels,) one should have a psalm, one a doctrine, one a tongue, one a revelation, and one an interpretation, and so all edify each other; if, I say, we are hedged in a system that precludes all this, and damnably putteth God's glory under a bushel, let us by all means pray that we may with due despatch be tumbled out of it. O it is a plain case, and we cannot hesitate.

Brethren, God ever intended that his truth, once fairly set up on the earth, should produce its fullest practical results; he will neither have it unapplied, nor half-applied: and I say the manner in which we are going on, thus conniving at a systematic repression of its fair influence, is something vastly like "holding that truth in unrighteousness." But, brethren, the righteous Lord loveth *righteousness*; and if he loves the thing, he loves its visible display. Why? Because such a display amply justifies himself and condemns the world, which inexcusably hates the good it clearly sees. And I believe that righteousness in the Scriptures always meansevangelicalrighteousness, exercised and displayed in an evangelical church. I believe we are following now our own ways, and not walking in the ways of God, and are careless like Israel of old of keeping his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments.

Brethren, it is customary for us, too customary, to

mention the Reformation as that which is passed, accomplished, completed long ago. Brethren, I say with boldness, we are called upon to consider that reformation as going on ever since it dawned upon the world, to consider it as yet incomplete: *I say, every saint is called upon to make it his primary concern as an individual that it should be completed.* Nothing else than this is meant by our Lord when he bids us "first seek the kingdom of heaven." What is the kingdom of heaven but the church? Therefore to seek the kingdom of heaven must mean to seek the good of the church, and to seek its thorough restitution if fallen, or if but half raised up; *and in doing this*, you shall find, O take it, I beseech you take it, as the certain truth of God, the deep blessedness of the work redound to your own souls. Therefore, ever, ever think of this, ever talk of this, ever pray for this; you especially that are ministers, ever teach, and preach, and point to this: Think not of those without alone, but think of your brethren; be not intent on evangelizing only, but also on edifying: remember what a little hath been done by our Societies in comparison with their immense show of machinery, and seeming bustle of exertion; contrast their results with those of the primitive church, when the work of evangelizing proceeded *on a sure and effective basis*; and anticipate a like end through the like means. Let us perceive at length that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but are mighty through God only; and let us have fairly done with these huge, noisy, but inefficient leviathans of patronage, oratory, and money.

And what, brethren, if I speak out the strong sug-

gestion of my spirit, what if it be the blessed will of our God and Father that the church before her removal from earth to meet her Lord in the air, should work herself back to the same aspect she wore when she was first planted in that earth? Thus:—the great apostasy considered in its effects, involves, it should seem, two principal results, the one affecting the glory of the Son, the other that of the Holy Ghost; the one concealing the work of the Son, the other concealing the work of the Holy Ghost. Now, of these two, I would not say with Luther that the former was “*articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ*.” for it is essential to *individual salvation* rather, and several persons may concur in seeing and confessing it without coalescing into any thing meriting the appellation of a church: but it is otherwise with the work of the Spirit, He can work only in a way consistent with what may be called his “*working*” under the *dispensation of the Spirit, so as to gather a church*; and a church exists only while the Spirit so exists in it. Now, as was observed before, the glory of either sustaining a total eclipse under the prevalence of the Popish apostasy, it is necessary and fitting that it should, on the part of either also, claim the satisfaction of a full renewal and recovery. And accordingly at the Reformation the great doctrine of justification by faith was brought triumphantly forth, and reclaimed by the reformers from the overwhelming mass of Popish falsehood that hid, smothered, and oppressed it. Then I ask,—as we have already witnessed, praised be God, the full extrication of the one from all that hell could do to keep it down, may we not reasonably anticipate the like issue

for the other? nay, may we not look upon one as the pledge of the other? and the more so, if we reflect that the work of the Son is, in its nature, prior to the work of the Spirit, and therefore came in proper order to be first reclaimed. Thus by the obscuration of both, will both have been indirectly glorified; for their equal importance in making the grace of God effectually known to the world, will, while the full exhibition of the work of each is made a single, a separate, and a gradual process, be distinctly and be fully seen. Rome was not built, neither will Rome have been un-built, in a day. We who call ourselves Protestants have been too intent in endeavouring by argument and controversy to prove it a false church, rather than in labouring to confront it with that the best of refutations, a spiritual church, powerfully realizing and positively exhibiting all the glorious attributes that the false and dead one should thus be made to appear the very mother of lies in claiming. That the attention of men hath been so strongly drawn aside from this to any other object, is, I doubt not, the effect of Satan's machinations for the express purpose. Satan, I doubt not, hath, by interposing every the most specious blind, endeavoured, and hitherto successfully endeavoured, to turn aside our eyes from "*the one thing needful*."

Brethren, I will not despair of yet seeing the adversary silenced by such refutation. I know there is much to discourage us in contemplating things under their existing aspect. I know especially that what I can denominate nothing else than practical Antinomianism, prevails abundantly. And this, I believe, results in a very particular manner from our present state of disorder and confusion: I see that a man, after know-

ing enough of Christ to secure his own salvation, hath nowhere a company of believers, edifying themselves in love, and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, presented to his view; now here a spiritual church calculated to invite the association of himself with it for the purpose of establishing his growth in grace. O there are ten thousand offices of love and acts of holiness capable of exercise only within the pale of a genuine church, acts and offices that are twice blessed, blessing him that gives and him that takes. And having no opportunity for these, he falls into an easy lukewarm equivocal supineness, fairly resting on his oars, and connected with a system which requires indeed to be raised mightily, in order to meet the standard of Scripture, but down to which, instead, that standard is miserably lowered. Nevertheless, brethren, I will not despair. Even now the church is rising from the ground on which she hath been lying; even now she stirreth herself up, and is beginning to recognize the high privileges and endowments of which, by the purchase and investiture of her Lord, she once was seized; she sees them, I say, and she wonders why she hath been so long content to want them. Yea, she is now altogether as a woman in travail, that laboureth to be delivered. And there are scribes well-instructed unto the kingdom, although in some points suffered still to err, who are giving richer and fuller apprehensions of Christ's person, glory, and offices, than have been for a long while rife in the world. Above all, a light hath fallen from heaven on the page of prophecy, and thousands have been called to the hope of the revelation of the day of the Lord.

But here let me be permitted to express my very deliberate conviction as to the utter failure we have exhibited in applying so great a doctrine to its truest and noblest uses. Instead of sounding it like a trumpet, and with its awakening note rousing into action and marshalling into array the hosts of the Lord, the armies of the living God; we have chosen to employ it rather in a way suited to kindle the flames of strife and contention. Care enough hath not been taken to preach it in a spirit marked by the sweet and sanctified union of love and knowledge. We have felt the superiority which the reception of so marvellous a light could not fail to bestow, and we have accordingly enforced it in somewhat of an overbearing strain; thus causing men to regard it with aversion, to regard it less as the truth of God than as the harbinger of unedifying controversy and the mere *watch* word of a theological party. I allow, indeed, most readily, that if after the full manifestation of truth to the conscience, men persevere in wilfully rejecting it, the severest denunciations *ought* to follow: but the God we serve, brethren, is long-suffering; and to be long-suffering as he is well becomes his servants also; it well becomes them ever to be cautious that *proof* do fully precede *reproof*, and to see that both result purely from one and the same principle, zeal for the glory of God. The faculty of delivering a sharp, steady, and seasonable rebuke is a faculty extremely valuable and extremely desirable; it is one moreover which is extremely rare nowadays among the saints: the reasons, it should seem, being that love is not at its height, and height of love alone will qualify the heart for such a rebuke, and

make its utterance gracious; as also that scarcely one, alas, amongst us appears to possess a sure, precise, and comprehensive view of God's whole counsel, as it stands recorded in his word—which yet is the portion of the least of the saints, and therefore we are fighting instead for our own opinions. And as long as it is so with a man, God, depend upon it, shall never let him fight with power. Let me add, brethren, in reference to the doctrine we now are speaking of, that its influence is displayed too exclusively in leading to a curious searching of the Scriptures, and not as well in pressing with the full weight of its solemn and soul-concentrating influence on our awe-struck spirits. Aye, I say, it is too little seen to make us “watch and pray always, that we may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

And yet, holy brethren, it is a doctrine to cut body and soul asunder, it is a doctrine to snatch us out of the flesh, and to elevate us above the world, and to sustain us in that elevation; and the wisdom of God knew this, and therefore the wisdom of God ordained it, and did not ordain the prospect of death to be that which should keep us, in spirituality of mind and practice, fully up to the mark, and permanently so. And I marvel that ere this its influence hath not drawn together a peculiar people; for on the same influence it was that the primitive churches were based and bottomed. But I see, I see that the Spirit *will be glorified*; he is minded we should recover entirely the very form and body of truth, that we may learn its scanty power over the mind, till *he* shall take it

up, and give it the fulness of his own energetic application. Brethren, I will yet have a good hope of this: yea, it becometh him who hath tasted the richness of the grace of God to his soul in Christ Jesus, to hope this and all good things besides at his hands; for he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, so we would but “forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things that are before.” Then should the testimony of the Lord’s coming be embodied as it ought to be; for if it is certain that such a doctrine ought to be so embodied, in order that it might be holden up in due testimony to the world, equally certain is it that such a testimony the world hath not yet seen. As yet we cannot point to any distinct and visible body, and say, “Behold the people who are waiting for their Lord.” But what if the virgins of whom we read in the twenty-fifth of Matthew be spiritual and segregated churches, emerging in these latter times, on the strength of a truth so mighty and so marvellously rescued, and represented therefore as taking their lamps to meet the bridegroom, some of which, brief as the space may be, shall find time to lose their salt, and quite decay in love and holiness? What if I see many that begin to be shy of connecting themselves with false systems, many that are actually in them manifesting an impatience of their connection, and several that have found themselves blessed in renouncing it? What, moreover, if I am able to discern already a little spot that seems to be brightening up *somewhere in the west*. Brethren, a man may tell me that there is an expression of our Lord’s which implies

the strongest improbability of any such result as I now fondly indulge myself in contemplating ; he may quote against me that question in the eighteenth of Luke ; “when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth ?” To this it would be a sufficient answer to say, that we are not to take such indications of what shall be providentially permitted, for a rule of conduct :—but it is in my power to say more ; I maintain there are strong reasons for understanding this surmise of our Lord as meant of the elect Jewish remnant, whose faith shall be put to the most fiery trial, and be ready to fail in the great time of Jerusalem’s final trouble, the moment perhaps before our Lord comes visibly down from heaven to rescue his despairing supplicants. And I might adduce several passages from the Psalms and prophets which suggest the same idea. Moreover, I oppose to any inference which may thence be raised what our Lord says in the twenty-fourth of Matthew, “Blessèd is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing,” doing what ? “ruling over his household, and giving them their meat in due season ;” and I contend that this is a picture of a faithful and able pastor, appointed by Christ himself, for it was *his lord* that made him ruler over his household ; and such a one therefore, and so graced and so gifted as those he gave when he ascended up on high ; one that feeds the flock of God, being an example to the flock ; behaving himself suitably *in the house of God*, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth : I contend that it hence implies the existence, at the time our Lord comes into the air to receive his saints, a time quite distinct

from his coming down to the Jews on earth, of a well-ordered and well-governed church, and such a church as no one can at present show me.

And now, beloved in the Lord, before I close this appeal, I will throw together some considerations, too weighty, as I certainly judge them, not to have a place. And I will first mention what indeed hath struck me very forcibly, I mean the utter absence among many professing godliness, of that *lively fear* which it is so gracious and so good for the soul to be imbued with at all times towards her Maker; not the fear that perfect love casteth out, but such as God never can but claim from his people: "if I be a master, where is my *fear*?" and such as Job confessed, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: *but now mine eye seeth thee*; wherefore I abhor myself." These words of Job suggest, moreover, the cause of this: with many, I doubt, God is apprehended merely *as a notion*; the belief in him, and the worship of him is merely *notional*. But God, brethren, is to be apprehended as a *person*; yea, the Holy Ghost must come upon us, and the power of the Divine Presence must continually overshadow us, and the soul must stand before her manifested God in an attitude of subjection, observant, constant, and profound. Such a keen and abiding sense should be the very air we breathe. And herein lies, I say, the full, unspeakable blessedness of Christ's redemption, that to all the actings of the soul, one great object, definite, paramount, and all-sufficient, should be given; this is the well of water within a man, springing up into everlasting life; these are the rivers of living water flowing out of his belly; hence he makes

ceaseless melody in his heart; hence he rejoices evermore. Brethren, far better would the value of Christ's mediation be understood, when its glorious fruits were thus every moment experienced, than when, as is now so frequently the case, escape from hell or pardon of sin alone is dwelt upon and rested in. And then, brethren, far better should we know, far more ardently be stimulated to propagate that light around us which had shone into our own hearts, which indeed is none other than the light of God's countenance, than now we are, when our zeal, acting through societies, (so truly spiritual a medium!) can only be designated as a vague excitement, vaguely affecting what is vaguely called the salvation of immortal souls. Brethren, that is *not* the ultimate point. Brethren, if that *is* made our ultimate point the object we pursue will soon become little better than a thought of the mind, a lie of the flesh; something not from above, but something earthly, sensual, and devilish; yea, we shall become vain in our imaginations, and our foolish hearts be darkened: our dream will be of a millennium of our own, accomplished in our own way, and realizing our own fancies. Preaching the Gospel shall certainly be one expedient, and, to be courteous, we will assign it due precedency, and call it the principal one; but at the same time we will teach it not to be improperly exclusive: it shall admit religious toleration, civil freedom, general education, liberal principles and liberal institutions into friendly union and cooperation; not forgetting art, science, and literature, things in which several among ourselves excel and delight, and for which we are held in esteem, admiration, and repute with others. God, to be sure, hath

said in his Word he will stain the pride of human glory ; that there is a day, even *that* day, in which the Lord alone will be exalted, and that it is a day which shall be upon "all pleasant pictures," not sparing such lighter vanities : but, go to, these things are "*spiritually* discerned." Brethren, let us not talk of the salvation of souls apart from the glory of God, nor let us aim at the salvation of souls otherwise than in subordination to that glory, nor any otherwise than as having seen and felt, and still continuing to see and feel within ourselves that "excellent glory." Not only will God assuredly bless no other end, but no other end is equally by its own nature calculated to sustain a course of action, and an exertion of energy in unwearied, unabated steadiness and intensity. For infinite goodness is by necessity of nature communicative of itself ; and the more pure created goodness is, the more it will resemble, in this respect, the goodness that is infinite and uncreated : without needing to form deliberate plans of beneficence, it essentially and necessarily contains an instinctive and an ever-active principle of self-propagation. Now there is none good but one, that is, God ; and there is no created goodness but the image of God stamped upon the soul by grace, which purely and fully taken in, will then be purely and fully given out. Brethren, let it be this glory of God which we make our final object ; let it be this glory which we burn to diffuse : it is this glory, and nothing else, which is in fact the salvation of an immortal soul ; the glory of God seen in the face of Jesus Christ, standing out to such a soul in unveiled majesty, a naked, absolute, distinct, and palpable perception, in one and the

same moment slaying and reviving it, abasing it to the dust, and exalting it to the heaven of heavens, infinitely above it yet awfully near it, more desirable than life although more terrible than death. And, as I have said before, that this glory is not embodied, multiplied, and reflected in a church, the only possible means, the only means contemplated, the only means ordained by God himself to secure its exhibition to the world, is because it cannot be said of one of us that every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, because we are all more or less following our own wills, and walking in our own ways. We are content to dwell in decencies: there are amongst us those who are denominated Calvinists, who, holding the most clear and correct notions of doctrine, seem to regard them, as the Jews of old regarded the law—they *rest* in them. Yea, and they make their boast of God, and *know* his will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed *by these doctrines*; and are confident that they themselves are guides of the blind, and lights of them which are in darkness, instructors of the foolish, teachers of babes which have the form of knowledge and of truth *in the doctrines of grace*. But their practice: *that* is as low as their views are high. I pray God there be not many self-deceivers among them. To be but touched with one real glimpse of the Lord's glory is worth a world of speculative orthodoxy.

In the next place, by our want of internal compactness and visible separatedness from the world, we encourage the very pernicious error that there is, and that there ought to be, no distinction between the

world and the church. I have not time now to lay open with fulness the immense variety of instances in which this leads to false views of the Gospel, and shuts out from men's souls its truth, power, and comfort. And what a clear and firm ground of testimony it would be against nominal professors, if we were able to say, "You belong to nothing; why are you not walking orderly, in such a manner as Christ and the Apostles ordained? where is the company of faithful men drawn together and held together by the Spirit you are joined with?" Brethren, consider that our present scattered and disjointed state is a sin against the light of nature, whose dictate it is that brethren should live brotherly. Judge in yourselves: can it be pleasing to our heavenly Father that his children should be thus? What with regard to his family is the first wish of an earthly parent? doubtless to see them united in the strictest love and harmony; and he would be the best and wisest and most beloved child that *should endeavour this before every other thing*, and never desist from his efforts till the contrary state were put an end to. And let me be bold to tell you, brother, whoever you are, that if you are making any thing else your primary or exclusive object, Satan owes you great thanks. Satan; I tell you, dreads nothing at all in comparison with seeing once more upon the earth a spiritual and united church; and Satan hath been labouring might and main ever since the Reformation to turn the eyes of men any other way. What mean these cursed names of division, Churchman, Quaker, Presbyterian? I know they are music in the ears of hell, and carnal men may be indifferent to them; but I know that one

who is a disciple indeed of the Lord Jesus should indignantly reject and disclaim any other title than that of "saint." And if any brother tells me that our disease is incurable, I tell him in return, that the unhappy infidelity, carnality, and lack of love which prompts that assertion is the only good reason that can be pretended for supposing it so. What! hath it not been always in the power of the church to reform itself, and that in periods of the deepest declension? was it not so in the time of Josiah, when iniquity had so long abounded, and the day of reformation was but as the flare of an expiring taper before the day of vengeance? What! hath not the character of the church been the same in every age? Ought there to be a whit more of conjunction and friendship between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent now than at the first? Ought there to be a whit less of division and enmity, than when the holy family of Seth worshipped Jehovah on the mount of Paradise by themselves, and the apostate family of Cain dwelt in the land of Nod by themselves? Let no man join what God hath put asunder. But in the present day men *are* with all their might labouring to neutralize the fiat of their God. There never was a time when the church was so fast merging in the world: and I say that when judgments are in visible preparation, when the hearts of men are beginning to fail them for fear, precisely, that is, when the hapless world needs most the distinctest testimony from the church, the church itself, hand in hand with that world, is rapidly sinking along with it into the supineness of death, and was never so little competent to give it. O ye saints of

the Lord, arrest this work and triumph of the devil, and flee ye, flee ye, out of Babylon. Heed not those who would frighten you with schism: such are troublers of Israel, such are teachers that understand neither what they say nor whereof they affirm, they are themselves the truest schismatics, for they would keep the saints asunder. You are now guilty of withholding any adequate evidence of your professed subjection to the Lord Christ, and so he loses the visible glory of that spiritual headship which the firm contexture of the members alone attests; yea, by your act and deed he is defrauded of it. And you are totally without the true means of edification; for love alone constitutes edification, and true evangelical love, such as is indeed the fulfilling of the law, can exist only in a true evangelical church.

Alas! the Epistles have been written upon far too much, and far too little acted upon: their life and power have been entirely lost; circumstances have not been applicable to them, and therefore they have been made applicable to circumstances. But it cannot be too often repeated and too well remembered, that as this is the dispensation of the Spirit, so we are under the strongest obligations to satisfy the spirit of the dispensation. Why are there such scanty notices of church government and church order in the books of the New Testament, whereas those of the Law abound in the most minute and particular directions? Because the fulness of the Spirit's presence made them altogether unnecessary; and *because that very omission was designed to be a method of forcing us to trust completely and implicitly on the Spirit's presence and the Spirit's teach-*

ing. Therefore obtain the Spirit, and you obtain every thing. Therefore let each man give himself to the Lord, with fasting and with prayer let him give himself to the Lord: if he finds himself indisposed for this, let him then, in the first place, pray for the Spirit of grace and supplication; let him pray that it may be given him to understand and to mourn over the sad condition of the saints; let him pray that he may receive mercy to refuse no individual sacrifice necessary to amend this condition. Let him, however, determine with himself that, as at the beginning, the Spirit alone shall do every thing; let him put his hand on his lips, and tie up his feet and hands, till the Spirit opens his mouth, and gives him to walk abroad in that light and liberty which none shall feel without confessing gladly that they are not his own, but altogether poured into him from on high; and so determining let him give God no rest till he raises up in the earth a church indeed, a church of renown, a church that shall declare His glory more loudly than the heavens, and show his handywork more distinctly than the firmament. The Lord Jesus says that to them that ask for the holy Spirit the holy Spirit shall be given. Remember what produced the sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind, and the cloven tongues of fire.

And now, brethren, I have disburdened my soul, I have borne witness to the truth, and I have done. In what I have said (I speak it humbly) I receive not testimony from man, for it is the mind of Christ made apparent from the word of Christ. If ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; though I will hope better things of you, for we ever hope well of

those whom we love, and I would love the least among you as I love myself. And indeed events may rapidly come on, that shall second with resistless and unthought of efficacy the tendency of this feeble exhortation; events that shall shake the saints, in spite of themselves, out of their several systems, and shake them together. Brethren, I have done: and now what remains but that I thank thee, O heavenly Father, and bless and praise thy holy name, that thou hast enabled me in thy light and strength to carry on this work, and bring it to a conclusion. And now cause, as thou seest fit, the power of thy Spirit to accompany its perusal, for the sake of the glory of thy name; to magnify which thou hast ever chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and hast chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hast thou chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are. And thou, which hast surely testified of thyself that thou comest quickly; even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

