

# THE CHURCH OF GOD

*VERSUS*

# THE CHURCHES OF MEN.

*An Antidote to*

“A SHORT CATECHISM ON BRETHRENISM,”

BY MR. D. M'LENNAN,

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AKAROA, N.Z.

*Also, a Reply to*

A LECTURE ON “PLYMOUTH BRETHREN,” AND

“CHURCH SYSTEMS,” BY J. G. ROGERS, B.A.

*By W. CORRIE JOHNSTON.*

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## PREFACE.

The chapters, here introduced, were begun by writing a small tract. It was actually put in type, but the developed result is now before the reader in a book, such as it is, of over two hundred pages. The thought and the circumstances, leading to my writing at the beginning, account for the directness, familiarity, and simplicity of the treatment of such great subjects. The method, however, has its advantages. These pages are chiefly intended to help Christians to whom the truths presented may be somewhat new. Some believers may thus be put on the way of testing wrong thoughts and popular mistakes by Scripture. One would urge the looking at the truths, not as connected with, or affected by, *persons*; but, as *principles* drawn directly from Scripture, to be maintained in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. Let the reader look at the truth, not at Brethren. Whether others, or the writer, carry out the truths, or live up to them, or not, each one who sees the truths has a personal responsibility to keep a good conscience by acting in walk, in work, and in worship, in harmony with what the Spirit has revealed to him from the Word. Indeed, all who profess Christ are responsible to *love* the truth, to *learn* the truth, and to *live* the truth. The opposite of these things are among the features of the last days.

Many do not love, do not learn, do not live, the truth—2 Thess. ii. 10-11; 2 Tim. iii. 5-7; Jude.

It is now about eleven years since the things here presented began to dawn upon myself. Prayer for, and longings after, something of the kind, were of a much earlier date. The way and the quarter whence light came were unexpected, as when it was said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" The late Dr. Cameron, St. Kilda, Melbourne, gave me a little book describing the literature and influence of the writings of Brethren. It was written by one while he was still a Presbyterian minister. This fact, together with the person by whom it was given to me, disarmed my ignorant prejudice. Some of the books by Mr. Darby, Mr. Kelly and others, were soon obtained. I read and compared them with Scripture, spending many hours almost daily for many months, and have followed up the literature ever since. The learning, the ability displayed, and especially the way the word of God was appealed to and opened up, and the work and the Person of Christ presented, put things hitherto learned in a new light; moved my entire being; changed the current of my thoughts; and gradually, in spite of my own will, gave to my life another bent and motive.

It would have been well if there had been more simplicity, faith, and courage at the beginning. Lacking these things, and dreading the consequences



of following the light, I drifted into, and became mixed up with, the world, though more or less always preaching the gospel. The effect of learning divine principles was to make me painfully conscious of not being in a position to live out, or bear witness to, the truths apprehended in connection with gathering and worship. It had also to be learned, however slowly, that the difficulties, the losses, and even the wrongs sustained in connection with the publishing business, when rightly viewed, were the Lord's hand acting in discipline. As with the remnant of old, it was found that all passed through was because of the neglect of what was due to the Lord in scriptural worship—Hag. i. 5-11; ii. 15-19. This acknowledgment is due, in now writing on such subjects, and it may be a beacon-light to warn others of danger. When the Lord takes hold of one by the truth, that one may have to get broken and crippled; but, in the end, he must become a worshipper at Bethel—Gen. xxv. Much sorrow to myself, and dishonour to the Lord, would have been avoided by being simple, lowly, obedient, and more willing to be nothing, at the outset. But the patience, the grace, the mercy of the Lord followed, restored, and said "the second time," "go," "preach the preaching I bid thee." Remembering also the words, "When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren," one would entreat and warn, lest any should refuse light, choose his own

way, miss much blessing, or plunge himself into great sorrow, or moral darkness, by yielding to the plausible considerations of expediency.

In the little book mentioned, the writer was replying to a student who had asked him what books to read in order to refute the views of Brethren. He gave him an account of their writings, and advised him to study these in the light of Scripture for seven years, and then he would hear and weigh his opinion. This came back to my mind after, without thinking of the advice, I had actually carried it out myself. It was interesting also to find that the one who wrote the little book, had also written the book, "The Blood of Jesus," which had been, years before, the means of showing me the forgiveness of sins.

I now send forth what follows, trusting, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, some to whom the Lord has, in His goodness, used me in the gospel, may also, with others, be led to "see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"—Eph. iii. 9-11.

W. CORRIE JOHNSTON.

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*An Antidote to a Short Catechism on Brethrenism.\**

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### INTRODUCTION.

DEAR BROTHER,—Your letter and “Catechism on Brethrenism” reached me while on an evangelistic tour on the West Coast. Travelling and work hindered me from completing a full reply as you requested. In your letter you say:—

“As you are not likely to see eye to eye with me, I shall be very pleased if you kindly write at length your impressions when you have read it through. Of course I am familiar with all the arguments in the writings of Brethren, but should like you to meet the position I have taken up fairly and squarely.”

The subjects broached by your questions would require a volume to give them clearness to those not taught in the Word of God.

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\*“A Short Catechism on Brethrenism,” by Mr. M'Lennan, Minister of the Presbyterian Church, Akaroa, N.Z.

In the Preface to the "Catechism" you say, "The object contemplated in the publication of this treatise is not controversy but enlightenment." I accept this in good faith, and trust that when I affirm that these words also express my object in publishing an antidote my statement will likewise be received implicitly. It will grieve me, however, if my doing so should result in any breach of friendship between us, or any unkind or bitter feelings with some of my most esteemed personal friends who are your brethren in the Ministry, or in the communion of the Presbyterian Church. I have little aptitude, and less love, for "controversy," but through the grace of the Lord Jesus to writer and reader there may be some "enlightenment." This must not therefore be taken for an attack upon you, or Presbyterianism, as a reply "at length" has been requested by yourself in the most kindly and courteous manner. Your "Catechism" seems to be abroad pretty widely already, and I am asked from several different quarters to write an antidote, and if I do,—to use your own words,—I repeat it "is not for controversy, but enlightenment."

But in spiritual things, as in philosophy, the chief hindrance to enlightenment is the bias given by circumstances, or the mind being pre-possessed by wrong ideas. The only way to gain the truth in either sphere is by throwing one's mind open to be taught like a little child. The child-like spirit is consistent with the possession of the most profound mind. The opposite may be most conspicuous where there is the smallest possible thinking power. Ignorance

and prejudice, like thistles and gorse, thrive best in small neglected enclosures. Where fresh ideas, like healthy cattle, move and gather that for which they have affinity, they check the growth of things which would otherwise thrive undesired. Even wild cattle will make tracks through, and open up, the densest undergrowth in the bush. The ideas of which one writes may be thought to be of a kindred character, and certainly the undergrowth is wide spread and very dense.

You, my friend, may think this applies on my side, I may consider it applies to those who see with you. The truth of where it applies remains to be seen, and if there is a proper spirit, a number of points might be cleared up and a better understanding come to on both sides. Better still it will be, if the Spirit teaches and leads to our having one mind with Himself as to the truth of God.

But are you and the reader prepared for having mind and heart cleared and for learning and following the truth as it may be gathered from Scripture? If not familiar with the ideas which may be found in what follows do not judge rashly. It may be safely affirmed that if they are new they will not be understood at once. If you would know the truth of the matter you may have to read and weigh much that follows again and again in the light of Scripture. In the days of the Lord's sojourn on earth He pointed out that those who professed great zeal for God nevertheless made void the law by their traditions. The people also read the law with a veil upon their hearts. These things are true now. Tradi-

tional teaching is still a great barrier in the way of receiving God's truth. Theological ideas, imbibed from infancy, form a veil on many minds and hearts and prevent the acceptance of what the Spirit would give direct from the Word of God. One had studied and preached for about ten years. Only then was it discovered that my mind like coloured glass had given a tinge to everything taken up. During nearly other ten years another line of literature and teaching have been before me, and the unlearning is not yet finished. But knowing something of the light, liberty and blessing, of being brought, in some measure, to look at the *divine*, as well as the human side of truth, it need not be wondered at if one labours to persuade Christians to seek to learn truth from, and hold it with, God. Unless this is your settled purpose you had better not go further with what is here written, because it is likely to unsettle you as to cherished unscriptural ideas and add to your responsibility. But to those who search and learn from God there will be present and eternal blessing. It might be repeated, are you prepared to learn and follow the truth at all costs?

As an illustration of what is meant by the divine side of truth, you may think of the people in the slavery of Egyptian bondage. The human side of their redemption would be what they would enjoy when delivered, guided to, and settled in, the Promised Land. The divine side, on the other hand, would take in what God would receive in adoration and worship from them as a ransomed people in the midst of whom He had found a dwelling place—Ex.

xxix. 45-46. The human side meets the people's need and includes what suits them: the divine side makes God known and answers to the desires of His heart as God. The divine side necessarily takes in the human side of blessing in its fulness. The human side does not necessarily include the other. By making the sinner's, or even the believer's, blessing the object of service, you begin and end on a low level, and there is loss to the saint and to the Saviour. This is the very spring whence the most fervent evangelism takes its rise, and hence the blessing however great it may be, like water, rises no higher than its source. He that sows sparingly reaps sparingly. But when God's thoughts and what will suit His heart are the motives which constrain us in service, the highest and fullest blessing will be obtained. "Them that honour me I will honour" is a word which has its largest application when the worship and the glory due unto God's name are the things specially involved. If you think of what the prodigal receives when welcomed and seated at the feast in the father's house the blessing is great indeed. But when you think of how the blessing conferred unveils the father's heart, and enter into what the father finds at the feast, you have taken in a wider range and brought into view a divine fulness of blessing which well represents what is worthy of a Father God.

Now, however feebly this larger blessing may be apprehended, and though it may be even more feebly put into practice, it is the divine ideal which Breth-

ren seek to keep in view, in contrast to the more human ideal of the sinner's, or the believer's, blessing being the greatest good. The former results in a simple endeavour to own the Church of God: the latter has produced the Churches of men.

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## ORIGIN OF BRETHREN.

**Q.** Briefly indicate the origin of the Brethren.

**A.** First they met at Dublin, and subsequently another Assembly was formed at Plymouth.

**Q.** By whom were they chiefly formed?

**A.** By Messrs. Darby and Newton.

**Q.** Was there a definite recognition of the Ministry originally?

**A.** Yes, in the Plymouth Assembly.

**Q.** When asked to sanction this practice, what reply came from Ireland?

**A.** "We will not be overruled by the Plymouth Brethren."

**Q.** Was the term "Brethren" designed in the Word of God to designate any sect?

**A.** No, not any more than the kindred names "friends," "disciples," &c.

**Q.** Did Darby publicly state at Manchester in June, 1873, that "the world comes in by bits" into their Assemblies?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Was it not on the ground of separation from this evil world that they originated?

**A.** Yes, but according to Darby they have failed in this respect.



Q. In what respects, then, are they preferable to other Evangelical denominations?

A. In none; indeed, any other Evangelical body is more desirable.

Q. On what grounds?

A. Of love, unity, and, above all, of Scripture.

Q. Is Brethrenism not Scriptural?

A. No.

Q. In what respect?

A. Of sectarianism—of the Ministry—of the Church.—

*Mr. M'Lennan's Catechism.*

With *Plymouth Brethrenism* I have no more sympathy than you have; but you quite confound Brethrenism with the truth of God which flesh and blood hath not revealed, and you do not discern the things that be of God, but those that be of men—Matt. xvi. 17-23.

My belief and experience are that it is as real and as much the work of the Holy Spirit to show a believer the truth of the Church of God which is Christ's body—Eph. i. 22-23—and separate that believer unto the Lord, as it is the work of the same Spirit to bring a sinner to a knowledge and enjoyment of forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ. The sinner cannot comprehend or understand this till Christ is revealed in his soul. As little can the believer really know in power and enjoy the blessedness of realizing that he is a member of Christ's body till he has been brought out of everything to the Lord Himself by the special work and power of the Holy Ghost. You might explain sunshine to people who had been born and always lived in a mine. They would never

understand it till they came out and saw the sun and felt the warmth of his beams. God and honest hearts want reality and this can only be found in converts and worshippers, as they are sought and found by the Father working in power and in demonstration of the Spirit. There is *profession*, and there is *possession* of Christianity. There is *Brethrenism*, and there are *Brethren*.

It may be remarked as to the title, "Plymouth Brethrenism," that none who intelligently hold the principles thus described, own that name or acknowledge that or any other *Ism*. This may be thought a small matter, a mere quibble, but to admit the title is to surrender the very truth, position and principles, for which the Christians in question contend. Indeed the title cleverly begs the whole of the questions at issue, and then by reasoning in a circle it is thought to be proved that Brethren are as much a sect as "any other Evangelical body." You ask, "Was the term 'Brethren' designed in the Word of God to designate any sect," and answer, "No, not any more than the kindred names, 'friends,' 'disciples,' &c." True, then why do you give it the meaning of a sect by writing "the Brethren" as applied to Christians who meet in a certain way? This is just what Brethren seek to avoid by owning the title "Brethren" instead of claiming to be "the Brethren." In saying "the Brethren," you name every real believer, "all saints," every member of the "one body," and where you own the body you cannot also be owning only a part or a sect. 'Tis true that in speaking or writing of those Christians who seek to worship on

the principles which own "all saints" as "one body," a term is required to distinguish them from other Christians who own themselves to be sects or denominations. It should, however, be distinctly understood that those who own the title Brethren do so on *principle*, and for the express purpose of declaring that they refuse to worship on the principles, or in the spirit, of a sect or denomination. Brethren, like poets, are *born*, or *created*, though some of them may be also rather prosy. Members of denominations are *formed* or *made*, though many of them are devoted children of God. The former own what is *divine*; the latter own what is *human*, in the way they come together for worship. The principles acknowledged by each respectively are not merely distinct in themselves, but they are decidedly in contrast. Brethren make or form nothing. They simply endeavour to own what the Spirit has made them as the members of the "one body." Those in the denominations, who may be as really members of the one body as Brethren, are not satisfied with owning simply what the Spirit has made them in God's divine system, but they go on with the owning of what man has made as a human system. The latter proceeds on the basis of an agreement as to doctrine, mode of worship and government, by a number of persons, who, though they may be many, are not the whole of the children of God. This is what we understand by a sect or denomination. It is not only less than the whole body, but it is formed by, and acts upon, *principles*, which do not and can not apply to the whole of the believers now on earth.

The same Christian cannot, at the same time, act upon the principles of a Presbyterian, an Episcopalian, a Wesleyan, or a Congregationalist. He belongs to, and acts upon the principles of, the sect he owns. His being a real believer or a mere professor is another matter. Whether the one or the other, he can be a member of any one of these sects and act according to their principles, but as you say, "Sectarianism is from beneath." This, however, does not apply to Brethren. Though only two or three of them gather unto the Lord's name as members of His body, they seek to act upon the principles according to which only believers, and all believers, have been formed into one body by the Spirit—1 Cor. xii. 13. There may be hypocrites among them as among others, but they are told when there is any doubt about them, and removed when they are manifested. Brethren may be misunderstood and misrepresented, or some among them who are not over-intelligent may do these things themselves. Those who do know, however, absolutely refuse to own that they endeavour to act upon any other than the divine principles upon which the Spirit has formed all believers into one body.

It is true that the *return* to the practice of these principles was connected with Dublin and Plymouth about fifty years ago. The origin of Brethren, however, they claim, as Scripture shows, to have been at Jerusalem over eighteen hundred years ago—John xx. 17; Acts ii. 41-47; xiii. 1-5. Instead of being *chiefly formed* by Messrs. Darby and Newton as you assert, they were *absolutely formed* into one body by

the Holy Ghost—1 Cor. xii. 13. The source and spring of the movement was, under the Spirit of God, a fresh appeal to Scripture to see and carry out what was done in the times of the Apostles. Forms, ceremonies, traditions, theology, and churches were all tested by the Word of God as the only authority. Instead of being radical, with a recent, human origin, Brethren maintain that they are true conservatives, and have an ancient, divine origin. If a charter were unused for centuries and at length taken up, those acting upon it would trace their origin to the time the charter was given. Though Brethren began to move about forty years ago, the soul of the movement was the recovery of the Charter of the Church of God which had not been acted upon in simplicity since the first century. One text frequently used by Brethren may be said to give their watchword and answer you both as to their origin and their principles:—"This is the commandment, That as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it"—2 John 6. But the contrast between the principles of Brethren and those of sectarianism will be more apparent as we proceed.

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### SOME HISTORICAL FACTS.

As your information, in regard to persons, places and facts, is rather meagre and mixed, one may be pardoned for introducing here some statements which

put things more clearly and accurately. The following is by Mr. A. Miller, who gives a brief sketch of the origin, progress and testimony of those commonly called Brethren:—

In the winter of 1827-28, four christian men, who had for some time been exercised as to the condition of the entire professing church, agreed, after much conference and prayer, to come together on Lord's day morning for the breaking of bread, as the early Christians did, counting on the Lord to be with them, namely, Mr. Darby, Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Cronin, Mr. Bellett, and Mr. Hutchinson. Their first meeting was held in the house of Mr. Hutchinson, No. 9, Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin. They had for a considerable time—along with others who attended their reading meetings—been studying the Scriptures, and comparing what they found in the word of God with the existing state of things around them; but they could find no expression of the nature and character of the church of God, either in National Establishment, or in the various forms of dissenting bodies. This brought them into the place of separation from all these ecclesiastical systems, and led them to come together in the name of the Lord Jesus, owning the presence and sovereign action of the Holy Spirit in their midst, and thus endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Matt. xviii. 20; Eph. iv. 3, 4.

Amongst the many meetings which sprang up all over the country in the early days of Brethren, the one at Plymouth became the most prominent. "About the year 1831," says Mr. Darby in a letter to a friend, "I went to Oxford where many doors were open, and where I found Mr. Wigram and Mr. Jarratt. Subsequently in calling on Mr. F. Newman I met Mr. Newton, who asked me to go down to Plymouth, which I did. On arriving I found in the house Captain Hall, who was already preaching in the villages. We had reading meetings, and ere long began to

break bread. Though Mr. Wigram began the work in London, he was a great deal at Plymouth."

Their first meeting - place was called "Providence Chapel," and as they refused to give themselves any name, they were called in the town "Providence People." When the brothers began to preach the gospel in the open air and in the villages around, no small curiosity was awakened to know who they were; there was something new in their preaching and in their way of going to work. But as they belonged to none of the denominations, they were spoken of as "Brethren from Plymouth." This naturally resulted in the designation, "The Plymouth Brethren," which has been applied to them—sometimes in derision—ever since. "One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren;" here we have the title which the Lord Himself gives His disciples. (Matt. xxiii. 8.)

The division which took place in 1848 is also referred to by you. Mr Darby's own words about it may as well be given here. They were written in answer to Mr. Monsell:—

"One word on Plymouth, since Mr. M. returns several times to the 'schism of Plymouth,' although that has, for the purpose here, but a slight importance.

The brethren who, at Plymouth, had from the commencement devoted themselves to the work, as well as others who had helped in the oversight of the flock, met each week to take counsel together on all that concerned the welfare of the assembly, the reception of members, &c., and the work in general, communicating in detail to the flock all that which, in general, would interest them, and specially all the cases of public discipline, which demanded any public act on their part. The supper was open to every Christian; gifted brethren, whencesoever they might have come, partook of the supper as members of the body of Christ, and exercised freely as such their gifts. There was much blessing. There were also difficulties, for which God in His grace provided.

Mr. Newton, to make use of his own expression, for twelve years laboured, heart and soul, to bring in there the clerical system. He succeeded in breaking up the little meeting of which I spoke. He prevented brethren of other places from coming; and finally, when I resisted this, he declared, in the presence of some fifteen brethren met on this matter, that he sought to make Plymouth a centre, and to produce there, amongst those who were there, a union against the views of brethren; adding that he hoped to have under his influence, for this end, the assemblies of the three neighbouring counties.

It is clear that I could not agree to this.

Satan sought to overthrow the brethren. Without doubt there had been neglect, since this had thus crept in amongst them. But outside of a little circle of intimate friends, no one suspected it, until Mr. Newton thought himself strong enough to strike the intended blow. God, however, in His great grace, watched over His testimony and over His poor children who, without doubt, had failed therein. It is possible that, in the hard contest which I have had to go through, I have failed in different things; but, at bottom, I have nothing on my conscience. I asked for the re-establishment of the little meeting whereof I spoke. Finally, God brought out all into the fullest light: and a system of lies, of intrigues and blindness, the work of Satan—the like of which I have seen nowhere—was clearly manifested. The brethren in general having shown firmness in this matter, God blessed this also; and it was discovered that Mr. Newton had, for a long time, secretly taught, concerning the person of Christ, doctrines which overthrew the gospel; that for a long time, they had been circulated with his knowledge, by means of sisters whom he had gained over, who had positive orders to let nothing of it be seen by those who could judge of it, and who had a list of the persons to whom it was permitted to entrust the manuscripts which contained these doctrines.

Now Mr. Newton having put forth these doctrines in a



reading meeting, they drew the attention of a brother, who, though he was quite under his influence, was nevertheless sound in the faith. He wrote on the subject to Mr. N. The latter answered him, justifying his doctrine, which he asked this brother to keep concealed, because, said he, there were saints who were not yet prepared to receive it.

Here is that doctrine: It is that Christ, born of Adam, is his descendant, so that the expression 'made sinners' (Rom. v. 19) applied to him; that is, that through his being descended from Adam, the head of the human family, Christ was constituted a sinner, and exposed to all the consequences of the state in which He found Himself; that He had to obtain life by observing the law; that through His faithfulness He extricated Himself from this state; that at the time of the baptism by John He ceased, from being under the law, to be under grace; that He had to find His way up to a point where God could meet Him, and that this was in death, in the death of the cross: that consequently, Jesus experienced the feelings which an elect man, yet unconverted, must have experienced, if he had a suitable sense of his position; and that Jesus experienced them, not as our substitute, but as associated by His birth with man and with Israel in the condition in which they were respectively.

When the very friends themselves of Mr. Newton told him, that if he did not retract such a doctrine, they would give up all intercourse with him, he withdrew the application which he had made of Romans v. 19 to the Lord Jesus, but expressly meanwhile maintaining all the rest of the doctrine up to this day. At least he maintained it still, when very lately I left England.

Thanks be to God, the brethren were delivered, and these doctrines repelled. Those of our brethren who acted at Plymouth in concert with Mr. N. were quite undeceived and delivered through the great grace of God. They confessed they had preached a false Christ; and they did this in such a manner as to give them a right to the full confidence of brethren. Some still followed Mr. Newton, and he built a

chapel for their use. But, despairing of exercising any action over brethren, he tried to gain some influence among the members of the National Church, and amongst the members of the Scotch Free Church in London. I am told that they also are beginning to be on their guard.

The brethren are not only delivered but strengthened. For, painful as it was, this sifting has been salutary to them. And it was needful; for worldliness had slipped into their midst, and at Plymouth it showed itself boldly. All feel that a weight, for which no one could account, was removed. The field of labour is wider than ever; and I have never found so many doors widely open, nor so much blessing, as during my last stay in England. And (oh! the wondrous grace of God, which has greatly struck me) never during all this painful time, has the gospel preaching, on the part of faithful brethren, been checked, and never, I believe, was it more blessed.

That all this has been very humbling, I allow, and brethren feel it; and I hope that, by the grace of God, they will feel it as I do myself. But God has strengthened the faith of many brethren; He has enlightened and strengthened them in their walk; He has made many of them intelligent, who only walked with brethren for the blessing which they found amongst them; He has brought out important truths, which were but little known; and brought into full light the devices of the enemy, of which one had no idea.

Such is, in a few words, the history of what is called the Plymouth schism—a painful lesson, but blessed.”

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## BRETHREN NOT UNDERSTOOD.

Unconverted men might reason to their own satisfaction that you have not peace with God, or that you cannot know that you are saved till you

wake up in Heaven. You have peace and know now that you are saved all the same, and can smile at, pray for, and pity them. With meekness and in all love and sincerity one may assure you that your Catechism shows that you are about as much outside the principles you challenge, and condemn, as unconverted men are outside the sphere where there is the enjoyment and assurance of a present salvation. In this one need not forget that you assert that you are "faithfully and justly representing these views," nor need one question your sincerity. You are as really a member of the body of Christ as I am, but you are like an heir who has not waked up to know and use his wealth and enjoy his privileges, though he may also find that there are responsibilities and sorrows as well as joys. I have been as sincere as you are in the same position. I know that position, and one knows the difference and desires to show grace to those still in your position. Yet you, and such as you, are the Brethren I own and not any *ism*. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another." "Speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another." Your preface again comes to mind at this point, as you affirm,—

"My conscience gave me no rest until I performed this duty of faithfully and justly representing these views to the Christian public."

The sequel will show if it is needful to add, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren." "But be ye not called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren."

Do not mistake me as if one meant to wound you. One only wishes to put your teaching as others see it. A Roman Catholic priest might write as fair, good, and true, a catechism on Presbyterianism as you have done on Brethren. It would suit Catholics and those who do not know any better. Christians to whom an *ism* is nothing in comparison with the truth they have received from and hold with God, would only smile at and pity this holy father. So it is with your questions, and those brethren who have had truth revealed to them by the power of the Holy Ghost. I have proved it by reading your tract to a few believers on several different occasions, and they smiled, and all round expressed surprise at, and pity for the author. One of them went on to remark "but that will be received as the truth among the denominations." Well then which of us might say—"Are we blind also?"—John ix. 39-41. The Lord alone can give eyes to see, but you say you are familiar with all the arguments. That may be and yet you might not *know*. Such things require a moral state corresponding to them as they are only spiritually discerned. Here is an instance of what is meant—"Jesus took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again"—Luke xviii. 31-34.

Here was a perfect teacher, absolute truth, instruction wholly according to Scripture, told to believers with the most minute details. What follows? "They understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." Why was this? The cross was involved, and they had a *will* that things should be otherwise. They had the truth presented, but they were not in the moral state, or the spiritual will-less, broken condition suitable for its reception. They had position, plans and prospects, which the cross would smash to pieces. This was why after such teaching "they understood none of these things." Bear with me, brother, if I say that I know a good deal about this from my own experience, and I believe that you also have furnished a striking illustration of the far-reaching principle of this Scripture when you affirm that you are familiar with all the arguments in the writings of "Brethren" and yet have put into print such a representation of their tenets as is found in your Catechism. To have a thing in the head is one thing, and to get it in the heart and soul,—or rather that by the power of the Holy Ghost it gets you—is a very different thing. It was the Lord's own argument, "Come and see," and "if any man wills to do His will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Formerly one thought he knew and could write about the Church of God and worshipping where there was liberty for the Spirit. I had been reading the writings of Brethren in the light of Scripture for seven years, but I never knew the

principles in power till I was in the place where it was sought to carry them out in practice. This is easy of explanation. A sinner has to be convinced of his failure and ruin before he sees and accepts the way this is met in Christ. So a believer has to see and own the failure in worshipping where it is not according to Scripture before he will give up human arrangements and in "the obedience of faith" fall back on the directions and principles of God's word. When he does so he finds, as I did, that obedience goes before blessing, and that to the upright light arises.

A Catholic's understanding and appreciation of Protestantism, while he means to remain a Catholic, is about as fair and just as the estimate of the principles of Brethren given by a member of a denomination while he means to remain in and contend for his denomination. There is force in the wisdom which says, "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." No one can ever really know the truths and principles in question till he is outside everything contrary to them, and inside that which seeks to give them expression. In natural things, painting, sculpture, music, and all the arts and professions theory and practice must be combined to have real knowledge. In spiritual things this is far more true. You must have experience to know, and "a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven." Once he has so received and known the carrying out of the truths and principles of 1 Cor. xii. and xiv., though everything outwardly went to pieces, he could never be satisfied with anything

else. The failure of representatives in parliament does not prove that government on such principles is wrong or impracticable. 'The conduct of unworthy members does not overthrow the British Constitution. Men do not thus confound principles and practices. The facts of scenes, "confusion," and the "dull, flat, heavy and unpopular" meetings do not prove the constitution to be at fault. No; nor do these things in practice in assembly meetings prove that the principles of Brethren are unscriptural as you affirm. I once studied in a night school where there was a large hall in view, filled with dancers. We could see the dancers without hearing the music. Their movements appeared ridiculous. Many a time have I been reminded of this on hearing people's remarks, or seeing writings criticising Brethren, by those who do not understand the principles of Brethren. They are the thoughts and remarks of those who see the movements of the dancers without hearing the music. Those within in either case have very different thoughts from those without. It need not be wondered at if, as you say, we do not "see eye to eye." The principles and motives which led me out of the Presbyterian Church among Brethren, and which influence me in service, have often been a puzzle to my old friends. This may give a clue to the solving of the riddle and account for much which perplexes other Christians as to the motives by which Brethren are moved. Others only see the dancing without hearing the music, and though the dancing may be rude and defective, it does not follow that it is the same with the music.

## THE BODY OF CHRIST.

Q. Prove from the Word of God that divisions in the Church are wrong.

A. Consult Romans xvi. 17, 1 Cor. i. 10, and 1 Cor. xi. 10.

Q. Into how many sects are the Brethren divided?

A. Into a large number, and often these are in bitter hostility.

Q. Is this according to Scripture?

A. No, we are to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," (Eph. iv. 3), not by separation, but "forbearing one another in love."

Q. Prove from Eph. iii. 2-6, that the Church was a body in other ages.

A. This passage destroys completely the theory of the Brethren, for it teaches that the Gentiles were members of "the same body." What other body can this refer to but the Jewish Church ages before the day of Pentecost?

Q. Is their teaching on this subject plainly at variance with the Word of God?

A. Yes, according to the above and other passages of Scripture.

Q. But how could the Jews be members of the body the Church, when the Spirit did not come till Pentecost? Does not 1 Cor. xii. 13 say: "By one Spirit are we all, whether Jews or Gentiles, baptised into one body"?

A. The Gentiles were not made "fellow-heirs and of the same body" by the Spirit at all, but by the Gospel (Eph. iii. 6).—*Mr. M'Lennan's Catechism.*

You "prove from the Word of God that divisions in the Church are wrong"—Rom. xvi. 17; 1 Cor. i. 10-13; iii. 1-4; xi. 18. With this I agree, but the age, the size, the respectability of the division does not make any division right. The "small exclusive sects" with you seem to be the greatest sinners. But the Presbyterian Church you are in is one of



forty-four different Presbyterian Churches which were represented at the Pan-Presbyterian Council. So there are sects within Presbyterianism, and the whole of Presbyterianism is only a sect itself. Scripture condemns all sects, all divisions, all denominations. It is one thing to write this and condemn the "discords, wranglings, and divisions," and it is quite another thing to feel that these things are our common sin and shame, and weep over them in the Lord's presence as Nehemiah of old wept over Jerusalem—Neh. i. 3-11. This ought to be our experience whether these things take place in the presbytery, the church court, the committee, the congregation, or in the meetings of Brethren. It is the very spirit of sectarianism to think that because the wranglings may not be among the Christians we are closely associated with that therefore we are without blame and free to condemn them. Wherever these things happen among the Lord's people they are felt by Him as the Head, and ought to be felt by us as members, of His body. It is because sectarianism has paralysed parts of Christ's body that we do not feel, and that we so little realise, the meaning of these words, "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it"—1 Cor. xii. 26.

But will you pardon my saying that you and Christians generally in the denominations do not know what the body of Christ or the Church of God, as these terms are used in Scripture, really signify. This I know from having had experience of the position. Your "Catechism" puts the matter beyond question as to yourself.

You say of Eph. iii. 2-6, "This passage destroys completely the theory of the Brethren, for it teaches that the Gentiles were members of 'the same body.' What other body can this refer to but the Jewish Church ages before the day of Pentecost?" You affirm "that the Church was a body in other ages." Unfortunately for you and your reasoning the context says the *very opposite*. It is now, and not ages before, that the Jews and Gentiles are made members of the same body. The passage is all about the Church as "the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed, and which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God." It is clear that a body could not properly be said to exist before and without its head. Such, however, is what you affirm as to the body of Christ. You would not do this if you understood what was meant. Now a good definition often clarifies a subject. When we get an inspired definition we have light, truth, and authority. It must "settle all controversy" to all who are subject to Scripture. Here then is a definition on the subject before us:—Of the Lord as risen and exalted it is said that God "gave him to be the head over all things to *the Church, which is His body*"—Eph. i. 22-23; and, also, "*His body's sake, which is the Church*"—Col. i. 24. Clearly and definitely, therefore, the Body and the Church in this sense, are the same. If we distinctly apprehend the meaning of the Body we can then understand what is meant by the Church. Both Eph. i. and Col. i. show that the Lord *became* Head

of the body only in connection with His exaltation to the right hand in heavenly places. There, "He is the head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead." Before His death He abode alone—John xii. 24. By His death He was to "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad"—John xi. 52. In the first of Acts believers are spoken of as one hundred and twenty individuals. In Acts ii., for the first time, they are all made one, and even three thousand one hundred and twenty are spoken of as a unity, to which the Lord is adding daily. The key to the first of Acts is that He was "taken up." The very words are found four times, v. 2, 9, 11, 22. This was surely to lay stress on a very important fact. Man was in a new place, even on the very throne of God in heaven. In Acts ii., if not the exact expression, we have the fact also four times that the Holy Ghost came down—v. 2, 17, 33, 38. In a new way God was on the throne of man's heart on earth. By the one Spirit the Man on the throne of God had linked up His own who were on earth with Himself. They were one with Him, and one with one another. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit." "There is one body and one Spirit." "By one Spirit we are all baptised into one body." Christ became the head of the body as the ascended Son of God, and believers became His body by being formed into one through His receiving, in a new way, the Holy Ghost after His ascension and sending down the Spirit on the day of Pentecost—Acts ii. 33. From creation down the ages, all

that God did on earth, in a spiritual way, was by the Holy Ghost working among men. Now at Pentecost the Spirit as a person came to dwell with men. This could not be till redemption was accomplished. Of old God did not dwell with Enoch, with Noah, or with Abraham. They had not even an abiding symbol of His presence. The Shekinah only dwelt among the Israelites after they had been redeemed by the blood of the lamb. It was of them thus redeemed that God first spoke of them as His people and said he would dwell among them—Ex. xv. 13-17, xxix. 45-46. These are types for us and are written for our learning—1 Cor. x. 11. The earthly people were not distinctly looked at as a united people till redemption was accomplished, and so we learn that the heavenly people are only formed into one body when the blood has been taken into heaven and the Holy Ghost has come to earth. It was after His death, resurrection, and glory, that believers were united to the Lord and one another by the one Spirit dwelling in all of them. "There is one body and one Spirit." And, "he that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit."

While he was abiding alone "God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man." Christ the last Adam in life abode alone—John xii. 24.

From him, as one who went to sleep in death, the Church, His body, is formed to become the Bride, the Lamb's wife—Rev. xix. 7. This is not fanciful interpretation to suit a theory. It is plain Scripture. In Eph. v., after what comes out in a previous chapter about the mystery of Jew and Gentile being now made "the same body," you find that Adam and Eve are shown to have typified Christ and the Church. A man is "joined unto his wife and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." Union with Christ therefore is not by believers receiving Christ's life; nor is union even by faith as is commonly taught. The disciples, the one hundred and twenty, had *life from* Christ, they had also *faith in* Him, but till He died and rose and sent down the Holy Ghost they had no *union with* Him. The Holy Spirit as a person, now on earth since Pentecost, is our bond of union with the Lord and with one another. This was expressed with distinctness for the first time when as the glorified Man, He who was Lord and Son of God, said to Saul, "Why persecutest thou me," "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" — Acts ix. 4-5. He does not even say "*mine*:" He says "*me*." The poor despised believers Saul was delivering to be punished were owned by the Lord as a part of Himself. Strike a man's hand and is he not justified in saying why smitest thou me? The hand, or any other part of his body, is owned as himself. Peter "smote the High Priest's servant." How? By smiting a member of his body—he "cut off his right ear"—

John xviii. 10. So the Lord as the head felt and owned the persecuting of His people, who now through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost were members of His body. He is not "bone of our bone," but "we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." This was never said, nor was it ever true, of Israel. The Lord owned them as His people, but there was no thought of their being His body, much less were Gentiles then of "the same body."

Now if this, as we have seen, was not true while the Lord was on earth, and only true, when to Him it was *given to be the Head* at the right hand of God, and He received and sent down the Holy Ghost to make it true on earth, it could not be true, I repeat, of "the Jewish Church ages before the day of Pentecost." The "theory of the Brethren" therefore, that the Church was first formed at Pentecost is no mere *theory*, but a stubborn *fact* established by Scripture. You say Eph. iii. teaches "that the Gentiles were members of 'the same body'" "ages before." Now, as pointed out, the passage says, "in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed." It is not that Gentiles *were* in the *past*, but "that the Gentiles *should be* fellow heirs and of the same body," *now* in the *present* age. Further it says "the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God." Twice here in Eph. iii. and again in Rom. xvi. 25-26, and Col. i. 24-26, Scripture emphatically contradicts your thought that the Church, as that term is used by the Spirit, existed before Pentecost,

or that till then Jews or Gentiles were "the same body." Stephen speaks of "the Church—assembly literally—in the wilderness"—Acts vii. 38; but he is manifestly referring to Israel as God's earthly people among whom there were saved and unsaved, or even wicked men. This is not true of the Church as formed at Pentecost, to become a heavenly people, the body and bride of Christ, being called out and prepared to be presented, without spot or wrinkle, to Him coming forth as the Bridegroom—Eph. v. But of your theory of the body of Christ existing ages ago Scripture knows nothing. As the revised version puts it, the mystery was "kept in silence through times eternal." Any other view than that of "the Church, which is His body," being a new thing in God's ways only shows that the subject is not understood. The personal presence of the Holy Ghost is not distinctly recognized, nor the full results of His coming enjoyed by the individual, or by believers as formed into one body. The heart of the Lord, as He loves and delights in His Church, is not met by the answering affections of a people who enter intelligently into the near, dear, wonderful relationship of forming part of the Bride, for whom the Lord is coming as the Bridegroom.

The Apostle Paul entered into this with all his heart. "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God"—Eph. iii. The

“unsearchable riches of Christ” are usually taken to mean that in Christ there is such fulness of blessing that it cannot all be exhausted or known. This is true unquestionably, for in Him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell—Col. i. 19. But is this the Spirit’s thought in Eph. iii.? The chapter, indeed the Epistle, is the unfolding of the Church as the mystery which had been hid in God. Then it was not written in Scripture, nor revealed to the Prophets. The prophets mentioned in Eph. ii. 20, iii. 5, come after apostles. This is significant. They are not the Old Testament, but the New Testament, prophets. To the former the mystery was not made known: to the latter it was revealed. In the Old Testament you can find the incarnation, the sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory of Christ, who is to reign as King. Almost all in connection with His person and work can be searched out in the Old Testament. But from Genesis to Malachi you cannot search out the mystery, the Church. Of it there is nothing revealed. Paul was making it known by revelation. It was of the Church, as the mystery, he wrote when penning the words “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” In the Old Testament it could not be searched out. Not only was it unknown before on earth, but it was unknown in heaven, except as “hid in God.” Hence as connected with “the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven” the Church as the mystery is unveiled, “which things the angels desire to look into”—1 Pet. i. 10-12. God kept a secret in His heart from eternity till it seemed that Satan had triumphed in



getting the Jews to crucify their own Messiah. In the grandest way ever displayed, where sin did abound, even to the crucifying of Christ, grace did much more abound. The rejection of the King, and the necessary postponement of the earthly glory of the kingdom, were the extremity which became the opportunity for making "known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God."

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## THE CHURCH OF GOD.

Q. What constitutes the Church according to Mr. Darby?

A. "The Church, a thing spoken of in the doctrinal part of Scripture only by Paul, is composed, according to Scripture, only of the saints, from Pentecost till the Lord comes to receive it to himself." Then he goes on to say: "The first time it is mentioned in Scripture is when the confession of Christ being the Son of the living God is made by Simon, and the Lord declares that on this rock, now first thus revealed, He will build His Church; a thing yet future."

Q. Is this the only passage of Scripture in support of this idea of a future Church?

A. No; they also quote texts which speak of the Church as the body, &c.

Q. Prove that Matt. xvi. 18, "I will build my Church," does not teach what they affirm.

A. Our Lord only intimated to Peter the basis upon which He would organise the Christian Church. He says nothing about the non-existence of the Church in the Jewish dispensation. The Greek word translated "I will build," frequently refers to continuance, and implies that He would build His Church on this basis in the future, but He certainly does not affirm He did not do so in the past.

Q. What evidence is there in Acts xv. 15 of the continuance of this work of building?

A. James there speaks of the Church as a tabernacle that had fallen, and says: "I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up."

Q. What further proof have you of this in Rom. xi. 17-24.

A. The Church is there represented as an olive tree, composed of natural branches, the Jews, who were broken off through unbelief, and Gentiles, grafted in by faith.

Q. But does Mr. Darby not affirm that "they did not in their divinely-ordained place stand by faith?"

A. Yes; but the Word of God teaches otherwise.—*Mr. M'Lennan's Catechism.*

As to Matt. xvi. 18, "I will build my Church," you say, "our Lord only intimated to Peter the basis upon which He would organise the Christian Church. He says nothing about the non-existence of the Church in the Jewish dispensation." Now this is a sad way to use God's word. "Organise," instead of "build," is little better than the Romanist inserting "penance" instead of "repent." Then the thought that the Church and the Jewish dispensation could exist at the same time shows that you do not apprehend the radical difference there is between them. Instead of being a development of Judaism, Christianity is in contrast with Judaism. Their *principles* are irreconcilable as shown in Galatians. They are more distinct than a monarchy and a republic. For the latter to take the place of the former requires a revolution. The Lord showed that he was not going to "put new wine into old bottles," but "put new wine into new bottles"—Matt. ix. 14-17. The Church is not mixed with, but distinct from, the

Jewish dispensation. You say of Acts xv. 16, "James there speaks of the Church as a tabernacle that had fallen, and says, 'I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up.'" The context shows clearly that the Jewish dispensation of the past was set aside and that Jews should now be saved even as Gentiles. God was now visiting the Gentiles "to take out of them a people for his name." This is the Church and "as it is written, after this (the taking out of the Church) I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David." This applies to the taking up of Israel again in the Millennium after the Church has been caught up at the coming of the Lord—1 Thess. iv. 13-18. The same contrast between Israel and the Church, or God's taking up of Gentiles, is seen in Rom. xi. 17-24, but you confuse things again by not distinguishing between "the olive tree" (Israel) and the "wild olive tree" (Gentiles). Here, however, you must bear in mind it is not a question of vital, eternal relationship, but of an outward dispensational relationship, which might be, and was set aside in judgment. So also will the mere professing church be cut off in judgment, since it likewise has not abode in the goodness of God. You do not seem to notice what is there so distinctly, that Israel as a dispensation gives place to the Church dispensation, which comes in between Pentecost and the coming of the Lord, and that after this the Lord will take up Israel again and bring in the earthly kingdom in millennial blessing. All the confusion arises from not understanding dispensational truth. A little

attention to my tract with the Scriptures and diagram would clear away much mist. (See Appendix.)

But look a little further at the thought of the Church being "a thing yet future" when Peter confessed that Christ was the Son of the living God. As the Christ, the anointed one, He was destined to bring deliverance to the nation and set up the long promised kingdom in power and glory—John xviii. 33-37. It was clear that He had been presented to the nation and had been rejected. The nation in consequence was to be rejected for rejecting Him—Matt. xxi. 41-43. This comes out clearly at the end of Matt. xii. There He shows that the last state of the nation previous to the millennial reign is to be worse than the first. In the meantime they had been free from the unclean spirit of idolatry. Before the Lord returns in power to bring in the kingdom on the earth, the idol will have been set up in the holy place, and, except the godly remnant, the Jews, having received Antichrist, will worship this image of the beast.—Matt. xxiv. 15; Rev. xiii. 11-15. About three years and a half after the temple is thus profaned the Lord will appear and "destroy with the brightness of His coming" the "man of sin." He will also deliver Israel, bind Satan, purge the earth by judgment, and, with His saints in heaven, will reign over the earth for a thousand years—Dan. vii. 18-22; ix. 24-27; xi. 36-45; xii. 11-12; 2 Thess. ii. 8; Rev. xix. 11; xx. 1-6; Acts iii. 19-26; Rom. xi. 25-36; 1 Cor. xv. 22-28.

You may wonder what this has to do with the subject of the Church as announced in Matt. xvi.

There is a most important and instructive connection. In Matt. xii. the Lord is rejected. He then brakes the link with the nation and with nature by showing that all now in connection with Him is to be spiritual, and on the principle, not of sight, but of faith. Then Matt. xiii. gives us seven parables which present a kind of panoramic view of what is to happen from the time He speaks till He brings in His reign and "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father." The kingdom in patience or mystery was meanwhile to run its course. The time was postponed when He would bring in the kingdom in power or in manifestation. Hence you may better understand Matt. xvi. 20, "Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ." Why was this? Had they not been sent out for this very purpose?—Matt. x. Yes, and the offer of Christ had been rejected by the nation. Received as the Christ, he would have brought in His reign. But rejected, the cross and the place at the right hand on high were now before Him. The long dark night of the dispersion was now before the nation. What would the Lord have meanwhile? He is worthy, He must be a centre, and though Israel be not gathered He will be glorified—Is. xl. 5-6. Here is the space for the Church. God's purposes and counsels, of course, were behind all that took place. As the Christ the Lord might have brought in His reign. They rejected the King, and therefore meanwhile they could not have the kingdom. He was confessed as the son of the Living God and

said "upon this rock I will build my Church." He had been there to build the Tabernacle of David in connection with the kingdom. Now He is to be in a *new* place as a *new* centre and bring in a *new* thing, the Church of God. As the very word implies those in the Church are the *called out ones*. It is like the Roman or Grecian assemblies, in which slaves and criminals had no place. Citizens alone could act and vote there. Instead of all Israel and all the Gentiles being blessed as they will yet be in the Millennium, while the Lord is at the right hand on high, the Holy Ghost was to come down and call out from among the Gentiles and Jews, an assembly of people for His name—Acts xv. 14. This was to be a heavenly call, of a heavenly people, to be with the Lord as His bride in heavenly glory when He reigns over the earthly people in earthly places during the earthly glory of the millennial age.

All this is lost and the true nature and place of "the Church which is His body" is not understood when you want to prove the existence of "the Church in the Jewish dispensation." The thought that "the Gentiles were members of 'the same body'" and belonged to "the Jewish Church ages before the day of Pentecost" is all confusion and outside Scripture. To try to make "I will build" mean *re-organise* and apply backwards instead of forwards, either in English or Greek, is an abuse of language as well as Scripture. It is simply saying that *future* means *past*, or that white is black.

Suppose a millionaire had been building a mansion on a certain site and had abandoned the work before

it was finished. Having chosen another site, in other scenes, he might take his friends into his confidence and bring them to the place, where, pointing out a rocky knoll, he might say, "upon this rock will I build my mansion" Would he be speaking of what he had been doing in the past on another site, or of what he was going to do on this one in the future? That it was of the future work he spoke there could be no mistake. Now this is not imagination, but it is plain scriptural teaching. The Tabernacle of David had been going on in the past. The Lord leaves that work because He is rejected as the Christ. But being also "the Son of the living God," He now points out this title as a new foundation and says to His confidential friends "upon this rock will I build my Church." Not that He had been, or was building even now, but that He would build in future. When the Lord spoke, in Matt. xvi., therefore, there was no Church. It was still future. In Acts ii. 47, we find the Church is present and the Lord is adding to it daily. We have seen the reason of this change. Two things had happened never known before in heaven or earth. A Man had taken His seat on the throne of God in heaven: God as the Spirit had taken up His abode in men's hearts on earth. Christianity, the Church, therefore, did not begin with the Lord in His life on earth. It began after His death when He was made the Head at the right hand of the majesty on high. The Church is thus heavenly in its origin, character, and destiny. A divine Head sends forth a divine Spirit who holds in unity divine natures. Of

what is thus divine and eternal He might well say, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This is the eternal Church in contrast with churches which are born and die or such as shall be judged.

You will agree with this, as being in the habit of thinking and speaking of the *invisible* Church. But where is there in Scripture the idea of the Church invisible? When here Christ was the light of the world. In His absence His people were to be that, and shine as lights in the world—Matt. v. 14; Phil. ii. 15. The Church was lighted to shine. But who ever heard of an invisible light? The very expression is nonsense *visible*. Yet such is what matters come to because the real nature and place of the Church of God are not known. The Church is one, and this unity or *oneness* was to be visible that the world might know and believe that the Father sent the Son—John xvii. The world will not believe what it does not see. All of us ought to feel more deeply the part we have had in the failure to give the world such a demonstration of the character and mission of the Son of God and of the personal, abiding presence of the Holy Ghost on earth.

We have seen that the Church is Christ's body and that He only became head of the body in resurrection. Adam by the fall became head of a fallen race, whereas Christ became head of a redeemed race, and of the Church, as the one who rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand on high—Rom. v. 15; 1. Cor. xv. 45; Eph. i. 20-23. Likewise it has come before us that by one Spirit believers were baptised into one body—1 Cor. xii. 12-13. This



baptism took place on the day of Pentecost. It is clear therefore that the Church as Christ's body did not exist in Old Testament times, not even when the Lord was on earth, and that it came in as a new thing when the earthly reign was postponed through the rejection of Christ and the consequent rejection of Israel.

Abraham, as it were, offered Isaac and received him back in resurrection — Heb. xi. 19. After Sarah's death he sought a wife for Isaac his only son. Isaac stayed in the home of his father while the servant went unto his kindred in the distant land and brought Rebekah as the bride. After this Abraham was married again, and a numerous offspring was the result. This is a picture of what is before us. Christ offered up returns in resurrection to the Father's presence. Like Sarah, Israel is, by being rejected, as it were, meanwhile dead. The Holy Spirit like Eliezer has come from where the Son is in the Father's home to the earth to take out from among Gentiles and Jews a people to be presented to Him as a bride. After this, as Abraham had another family, Israel will be taken up again and made the centre of blessing to all nations in the millennial age.

Another Old Testament illustration may make the subject still more clear and interesting. Moses at first sought to deliver his brethren. He was rejected and fled into the land of Midian—Acts vii. 25-34. After having there received a Gentile bride, and tarried forty years, he was sent back into Egypt. Through the ten plagues and the overthrow of

Pharoah and his host in the Red Sea, Israel was delivered, brought unto God, and into the land of Promise. So the Lord Jesus, as typified by Moses, began in His earthy life to deliver His brethren in Israel. Like Moses He was rejected, and through death went to the right hand of God. There, during His rejection by His people, like Moses, He is also to receive a Gentile bride by the Holy Ghost calling out the Church. Having received the Church, when He will come into the air, He will anon return to the earth for the deliverance of Israel. Then as through plagues and judgments Israel was delivered by Moses, so, by judgments and in power and in manifest glory, the Lord will destroy His enemies, deliver Israel, and bring in the rest and blessing of the millennial reign. Meanwhile He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, but then He will send forth judgment unto victory—Matt. xii. 12-21. 2 Thess. i. 7-10: Rev. xix. 11; xx. 1-6. It is thus clear that the Church and the kingdom are distinct, though they are meanwhile present on the earth together. In the millennial age the Church will be in heavenly glory, reigning over the kingdom then displayed on the earth in earthly glory. The Church belongs to heaven though formed on earth. The kingdom belongs to earth though ruled from heaven. This was what Nebuchadnezzar had to be taught. Instead of being himself the source of power, he had to learn that the heavens did rule—Dan. iv. 26. Hence the phrase—*the kingdom of heaven*. Israel, in what God did for that nation, was the means of showing something of God's grace to the

nations which were witnesses of Jehovah's power in earthly places. When Satan got the Jews to reject their own Messiah, instead of God being baffled He brought in the Church and by it gives now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places a grander display of the manifold wisdom of God—Eph. iii. 10. In the millennial age, by the union of Jew and Gentile in the Church, God will not only show His grace as in Israel, but by the Church He will show in the ages to come the *exceeding riches* of His grace—Eph. ii. 5-7. Even in the eternal state the Church will have a place and a glory peculiarly her own—Rev. xxi. 2-3. The Church is not therefore composed of all who will have eternal happiness through the work of Christ. There were saved souls from Adam down till John the Baptist. There will be millions saved during the Millennium when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord—Is. xi. 9; Hab. ii. 14. Acts xv. 17. But neither those before Pentecost nor those after the Lord's coming into the air have any part in the peculiar blessings and glorious destiny of the Church which is Christ's body. There was no Church till He was made Head in heaven on His ascension. When He comes into the air, apart from His coming to the earth, the Church will be presented to Him as the bride without spot or wrinkle or any such thing—Eph. v. 27; 1 Thess. iv. 17. This is previous to the Millennium, and none of those saved then, any more than those saved and asleep in death before Pentecost, belong to the Church. John the Baptist and Old Testament saints are among the friends who are called, but the

Church is the bride, at the marriage supper of the Lamb—Rev. xix. 7-9. To the Church Christ is not King properly speaking. He is King of saints. Every one in the Church is a saint, but the saints of all ages are not in the Church. The Church is not reigned over by, but reigns with, the Lord, as a queen with a king. Again I may say all this opening up of Scripture and God's ways, all the special blessings to the Christian, and the peculiar affections by which he ought to meet the Lord's peculiar love for the Church, are lost when you swamp it among the mass of the saved, or mix it up with what belongs to Israel in the past, or what will yet belong to Israel in the future, when the Lord will cause the captivity of Israel to return and will build them as at the first and the nation shall be to the Lord "a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth"—Jer. xxxiii. 6-18. This is wonderful, blessed, and glorious; but to the Church, then in heavenly glory, will belong "the glory that excelleth." "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect"—Heb. xi. 40. The Church throughout eternity will be the vessel in which there will be the fullest display of the divine glory. When the new heaven and the new earth are brought in, and there is no more sea, the Church, "as a bride adorned," and as "the Tabernacle of God," will descend to dwell with men throughout the everlasting ages.

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## THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST

Q. But how could the Jews be members of the body the Church, when the Spirit did not come till Pentecost? Does not 1 Cor. xii. 13 say: "By one Spirit are we all, whether Jews or Gentiles, baptised into one body?"

A. The Gentiles were not made "fellow-heirs and of the same body" by the Spirit at all, but by the Gospel (Eph. iii. 6).

Q. Do we not read of the body being the temple of the Holy Ghost?

A. Yes, every believer's body is indwelt by the Spirit, but this only proves that the Spirit is with us as a Comforter, &c.—*Mr. M'Lennan's Catechism.*

In what you here express as to the Holy Spirit you lay bare the root from which the unscriptural ideas, the hazy notions of the Church of God, and the imperfect apprehension of Christianity itself, all spring. As Romanism has lost the true doctrine of Christ, Protestantism has lost the true doctrine of the Holy Ghost. Such ideas and defective teaching have become a tree whose branches cast a shadow over Christendom, shutting out the glorious sunshine and genial warmth so essential to the health and vigour of what grows under the shadow. The slender stems, the sickly hue, the absence of fresh flowers and fruit, all testify to the baneful shade. Christians have not learned the real meaning of the veil being rent, or heaven opened and

the Holy Spirit as a Person having come to dwell on the earth. These things may be mentioned in words as the truths of the gospel are by many who have not been born again. In both cases it may simply be the letter which killeth. In neither case is there the Spirit which gives life, power, and the conscious enjoyment of the blessings described. You yourself manifestly confuse the gospel with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The gospel brings life and peace to those who receive it under the Spirit's power. Formerly they were "dead," "condemned." On receiving the truth they were "quickenened" and "forgiven." Further on when they received the Holy Ghost they were made fellow-heirs and members of Christ's body. The possession of life was true of the Gentile to whom the Lord said "Oh woman, great is thy faith"—Matt. xv. 28; and of the Gentile Centurion of whom He said, "I have not found so great faith no not in Israel"—Luke vii. 9. Though these Gentiles are said to have faith and must have therefore received life and forgiveness, they were not then "fellow-heirs and of the same body," for Christ had not yet died "that He might reconcile both (Jews and Gentiles) unto God in one body by the cross," and "make in himself of twain one new man"—Eph. ii. 15-16; and the Holy Spirit had not come to form the one body. In the case of the woman of Canaan it is explicitly taught that though having such faith she had no claim on the Lord as Son of David. It was only when she gave up that plea and appealed to Him as Lord that she was answered. On that ground, not

as coming into Israel's blessing, did the Lord grant her request. On the ground of the wider title of Lord He could even then meet her case, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him"—Rom. x. 12-13. After this however, when Israel was broken off and the Gentiles were brought into blessing in connection with the Holy Ghost coming on Pentecost and forming the Church and reaching out to Samaritans and to Gentiles at Cæsarea, all were made "fellow-heirs and of the same body."

The other passage you quote—"By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles"—is the Spirit's own account of how we are made one body. Yet you say that it is not "by the Spirit at all, but by the gospel." One is certain that you do not intend it, but you nevertheless flatly contradict Scripture by saying so. The mistake arises from not perceiving the difference between the Spirit *giving life* and the Spirit *bringing union*: from not distinguishing the Spirit's *working*, from His *dwelling*, on the earth: from not understanding the real import of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. There was a gospel before Pentecost by which souls were born again and forgiven. There will be a gospel in the Millennium, producing like results. Gentiles as well as Jews in both cases were, and will be, saved by that gospel. But neither before Pentecost nor in the Millennium was there, or will there be, Jews and Gentiles "fellow-heirs and of the same body." That peculiar blessing belongs to the Church which is Christ's body and depends on the

presence of the Holy Ghost as a person on the earth. It is only true of those who are saved at Pentecost and until the time the Lord comes into the air to have the Church presented to Himself as His Bride. This will be more clear if we understand the Baptism of the Holy Ghost.

I have put the matter before, but you and present readers are not likely to have seen it, so I give it a place here.

The testimony of John the Baptist concerning the Lord Jesus was twofold. "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost." "And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God"—John i. 33-34. The Lord Jesus was to be revealed to John through John beholding the Holy Ghost descending and remaining on Him. The One who so received the Holy Ghost was, according to John's testimony, to baptise others with the Holy Ghost. It ought to be observed that neither in the passage quoted, nor anywhere else in Scripture, is it said that the Lord was *baptised* with the Holy Ghost. There is no Scripture to show that any individual, either before or after the man Christ Jesus, ever was baptised with the Holy Ghost. The reasons are obvious, and of the utmost importance. Without understanding them, real Christian position, Christianity proper, the Church of God, the body of Christ, as distinguished from the House of God, will not be properly apprehended.

We have, first of all, to get clearly before the mind what is implied in the fact of the *descending* of



the Holy Ghost. Did the Spirit not move on the face of the waters after creation? Did the Spirit not strive with man before the flood? Was the Spirit not with Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Isaiah, and other kings and prophets? Most assuredly He was. Prophets and kings, like Balaam and Rezin and Hadad, may also have been stirred by the Spirit of God. From creation, down the ages to the cross, the Spirit of God wrought on the earth. Others, besides holy men and children of God, like the tares among the wheat, were bent and swayed by the breath of His power. But never, till the perfect man was found on earth, coming up from the waters of Jordan, did the Holy Ghost make the body of a man and the earth His dwelling-place. The symbol of Jehovah's presence, the glory, had come and gone from the Tabernacle and Temple in Israel—Ez. xi. 22-23. Once more the glory returned. Not now in symbol, but in reality. Not behind the veil of the holy of holies, but in the body of the Man over whom heaven could open, while the Father's voice was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"—Matt. iii. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"—John i. 14.

This perfect Man needed no atonement, no sprinkling of blood. As in the anointing of Aaron, the type of anointing Christ with the Holy Ghost, the oil was poured upon his head, apart from any application of blood to His person—Ex. xxix. 7-20-21. So of Christ it was said, "Him hath God the Father

sealed ;” and “Thy God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy Fellows.” No one ever before had thus been made the recipient of the Holy Ghost. Nor was there another till the blood of atonement had been shed, and taken by Christ Himself into the holiest of all. In prospect of the cross sins were *pretermitted*, through the forbearance of God—Rom. iii, 25. But not till Christ had died and risen was the righteousness of God manifested in sins being *remitted*, and the gift of the Holy Ghost bestowed. The sons of Aaron had the blood put on the right ear, the right hand, and the great toe of the right foot, before they received the anointing oil where the blood had first been applied. So the sinner had first to stand in the efficacy of the blood of atonement before he was anointed with the Holy Ghost. Our High Priest, like Aaron, was anointed apart from blood, but he had first to shed His blood and take it into the holiest before His people could be cleared of all charge of sin, and sealed as the righteousness of God, by the gift of the Holy Ghost. Hence we read, “It is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart I will send Him unto you”—John xvi. 7. The coming of the Spirit is distinguished from all that was before, as “the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven”—1 Peter i. 11-12. Hitherto holy men may have been influenced, controlled, or, in a sense, filled with the Spirit ; but except in His own person, the Man Christ Jesus, and the Holy Ghost, as a person, were not present together on the earth. The coming to the earth of

the Holy Ghost, as a person, was made to depend on the going of the Man Christ Jesus to the throne of the Father. While He was on earth it was said, "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified"—John vii. 39. The difference between the past and present dispensations is thus given by the Lord. When speaking of the Holy Ghost He said, "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you"—John xiv. 17.

Complete Christian position is thus made to depend on two things. Before it could be known or given, a Man had to take His place in heaven on the throne of God, and God, by the Holy Ghost, had to take His place on the throne of man's heart on earth. This was first done, as recorded in Acts ii., on the day of Pentecost. Strictly speaking, therefore, Christianity proper commenced when a Man on the throne of God in heaven, by sending down the Holy Ghost, united men still on the earth to Himself on high. While the Man Christ Jesus was on the earth, His disciples had faith in Him and life from Him, but no union with Him. Union could only be in resurrection by the Holy Ghost. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone"—John xii. 24. As to the coming of the Holy Ghost, which was to take place at Pentecost, the Lord Jesus said, "At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you"—John xiv. 16-20. Henceforth there would not only be the knowledge of identification of life and nature, but also union for the first time in the scriptural sense as being members of the body of

Christ. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit"—1 Cor. vi. 17. Anything less is not true Christian position. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His"—Rom. viii. 9. "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular"—1 Cor. xii. 27.

When we simply think of the Lord Himself or individual believers, it is only the *receiving*, not the *baptism* of the Holy Ghost. On Jordan's bank—and again, in a new sense, at the right hand of God—the Lord Jesus *received* the Holy Ghost from the Father—Acts ii. 33. Looking at the occupants of the upper room at Pentecost as individuals, each and all receive and are filled with the Holy Ghost. But there is more than that which is individual. There is what is collective or corporate, and this, in the double sense of the body of Christ, and the House of God. Each believer is not only, by the indwelling Spirit, united to the Head in heaven, but he is by the same Spirit united to every other believer on the earth, in whom the Holy Ghost also dwells. It is this action of the Spirit, by which all are made one with Christ on high, that Scripture calls the baptism of the Holy Ghost. In the first of Acts, we have one hundred and twenty individuals in the upper room. In the beginning of the second of Acts, by the coming of the Holy Ghost, they are made one with one another, and one with Christ on high. They then form one body, of which Christ is the head. And, as indicated by the Spirit also filling the house, the sphere where they are, is constituted

the House of God by becoming the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost. The three thousand who receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost become members of that one body, and are also received into the House of God by baptism.

It is true that they themselves were not fully aware of what had really taken place as to the forming of the Body, and the constituting of the House. Nor was this understood or taught till the Apostle Paul was raised up for the very purpose of unfolding the mystery—Eph. iii. 2. These truths so characterise his epistles that they cannot be fully understood unless the Body and the House are apprehended. When he wrote the following words the baptism of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, and the bringing of the Jews and Gentiles into blessing, were described as never before—"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ; for by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one spirit"—1 Cor. xii. 12-13. This action of the Spirit should not be confounded with the being "filled with the Spirit," whereby now, as of old, a servant may be "endued with power," and fitted for, and carried through, special service—Eph. v. 18; Phil. i. 19; Acts vii. 55. We observe, therefore, both at the first and now, though individuals receive the Spirit, it is only *when many individuals are made one*, that there is *the baptism of the Holy Ghost*.

This was done once at Pentecost, and cannot be repeated.

Those at Samaria and Cæsarea, in a remarkable way, did receive the Holy Ghost. But instead of being another baptism, they were, through the Apostles, linked with Jerusalem, and brought into what had already become the Habitation of God. If not in such a distinct manner, every one since then who receives forgiveness and is sealed with the Spirit, is thereby brought into the unity formed and maintained on the earth by the coming and abiding presence of the Holy Ghost. This is the Church which is Christ's body—Eph. i. 22-23; iv. 15-16. Viewed as in the mind of God, it begins at Pentecost, and terminates when the Lord comes into the air—I Thes. iv. 14-17. As it now exists on the earth it embraces every renewed man whose body has become the temple of the Holy Ghost—I Cor. vi. 19. This thought cuts sheer through the rubbish of ages, accumulated by creeds, confessions, or denominations, and reaches to the eternal rock on which Christ is building His Church, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail—Matt. xvi. 18. The Lord, by the Spirit, adds those who thus receive vital, eternal, relationship with Himself. Of this Baptism of the Holy Ghost, therefore, a risen Saviour on the throne of the Father was the administrator; the Holy Ghost was the element; renewed men on the earth were the subjects; the place where it happened was Jerusalem; the time was the day of Pentecost; the result was the formation of the Church

of God, the body of Christ; and the consummation of what was then inaugurated will be when this Church, as the Bride of Christ, is caught up to meet Him coming as the Bridegroom—1 Thess. iv. 14-17; Eph. v. 25-27.

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## GATHERING TOGETHER.

Q. Do the Brethren not teach that Christians are “gathered,” not “met,” as other believers are, for worship?

A. They do, but the word “gathered,” or Greek *sunergmenoi*, does not bear this meaning elsewhere. In the same Gospel it is used in reference to the Pharisees gathering around Jesus (Matt. xxii. 41), and in xxvi. 3. to those who conspired against Him, and in xxvii. 17, it is applied to those who sought to put Him to death.

Q. If these were not gathered into assemblies by the impulse of the Spirit, is it correct to attach such a meaning to the word?

A. No. The text, “Where two or three are gathered in My name,” &c. (Matt. xviii. 20) plainly refers to social prayer, and is fulfilled when a few Christians meet in holy fellowship before the throne of grace. See the context of the passage.—*Mr. M'Lennan's Catechism.*

It ought to be clear at the outset that the worship meeting among Brethren is a very different meeting from the ordinary congregation in a church. In the former, the Lord, the Spirit, and the members of Christ's body, and worship in spirit and in truth are

the prominent thoughts. In the latter, the minister, the mixed meeting of saved and unsaved, and the service and the sermon are the ruling ideas. The monthly, quarterly, or half-yearly, communion approaches nearer to the meetings of Brethren. You and those with you, however, would not allow that these rare occasions are the only occasions on which you are *met*, yet they are the only meetings in which you could be said to be *gathered*.

As the subject of *gathering* is important, one may go a little into detail. You ask "Do the Brethren not teach that Christians are '*gathered*,' not '*met*,' as other believers are for worship?" Answer—They do, but the word '*gathered*' or Greek *sunergmenoi*, does not bear this meaning elsewhere. In the same gospel it is used in reference to the Pharisees gathering around Jesus, Matt. xxii. 41, and in xxvi. 3, to those who conspired against Him; and in xxvii. 17, it is applied to those who put Him to death." Do you not quite miss the point of "Where two or three are gathered in (or unto) my name?"—Matt. xviii. 20. You seem to deal with the mere act of assembling and overlook the all important *fact* that it is *in* or *unto* the name of the Lord. The latter must imply the owning of Him as Lord, and coming together to do His will and that alone which is in keeping with His name. The Pharisees were gathered together, "tempting Him"—Matt. xxii. 35-41; the priests and scribes consulting to kill Him—Matt. xxvi. 3; and the multitude before Pilate clamoured to have Him sentenced to death—Matt. xxvii. 17. These are very different assemblies



than where "the place was shaken where they were assembled together"—Acts iv. 31—or "upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread,"—Acts xx. 7,—or, "when the whole Church be come together into one place," 1 Cor. xiv. 23. The verb *sunago*, to come together, gather, or assemble, from which we get *sunegmenoi*, "gathered," (not *sunergmenoi* as you give it,) does bear this meaning elsewhere than in Matt. xviii. Besides those quoted, here are other remarkable examples. "Jesus should die for that nation: and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad;" "When the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst"—John xi. 52; xx. 19. "They assembled themselves with the church and taught much people;" "Had gathered the church together;" "The upper chamber where they were gathered together"—Acts xi. 26; xiv. 27; xx. 8. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ;" "You come together;" "When ye come together in the church;" "When ye come together into one place;" "When ye come together to eat . . . that ye come not together unto condemnation;" "When ye come together"—1 Cor. v. 5; xi. 17-18, 20, 33, 34; xiv. 26. Here are also two compounds of the same verb, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is"—Heb. x. 25. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord

Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him " —1 Thess. iv. 16-17; 2 Thess. ii. 1. You thus find that the Greek word mentioned does bear this meaning elsewhere than in Matt. xviii. These verses (Thess.) give a very vivid idea of the perfect gathering, and all gathering unto the Lord now ought to be on the same principles. There is the Person of the Lord, the authoritative call of the Lord, the united people of the Lord, the display of the power of the Lord, the holiness of the Lord, the joy of the Lord, and it is all according to the Word of the Lord. So, in gathering now, the Lord is the centre. His call gives the authority; the unity of His people is owned in their assembling as members of the one body; the Spirit of power is recognised, there is separation becoming the holiness of the Lord; there is the sharing of God's joy when worshipping, and room for everything prescribed in the Word of God. Such in brief is the assembly meeting. This is quite a different thing from meetings for teaching believers or preaching the gospel. It is a kind of meeting nowhere found in your or any other denomination. Individual teachers or preachers, in responsibility to the Lord, can call and conduct meetings, but they have no such power or place in the assembly gathered unto the Lord's Name. Members of Parliament can gather and address their constituents, or they can come together in caucus and address one another; but parliament *assembled* is a different thing. So, Christians gathered unto the Lord,—not merely met together—form a proper assembly meeting. There is more in

this illustration than can be taken in at a glance. The similarity between a parliamentary assembly and a proper Christian assembly is very remarkable. In the one you have the members properly elected; in the other, you have persons effectually called and converted so as to be true believers. Members of Parliament are authoritatively called together by the Queen or the Governor. Members of the Body of Christ are only really gathered when led of the Lord to seek their places in the assembly. Members of Parliament assemble in, or unto, the Queen's name in the appointed place. Members of the body of Christ gather unto the name of the Lord and have Him in the midst. Business can be carried on in Parliament with a quorum: there may be a real Christian assembly where "two or three are gathered" unto the Lord's name. In Parliament there should be order, subjection and the waiting to catch the eye of the Speaker: in the Christian assembly there should be holiness, dependence and the waiting to be led by the Spirit. In Parliament there ought to be the keeping to the business before the House and carrying out the purposes for which it has been assembled: the Christian assembly ought to come together for worship, edification, prayer and discipline. In Parliament everything ought to be according to the Constitution: in the Christian assembly all ought to be according to the mind and word of the Lord. There may be onlookers where both assemblies meet, but they form no part of either assembly. The difference, therefore, between an ordinary congregation and Christians really gathered is very

great. To explain it to one who does not believe in it is impossible. It requires to be enjoyed to be understood. This can only be where there is an honest effort to carry out and keep the words, "There is one body and one Spirit" and "one Lord," and "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is"—Heb. x. 25. Here is the word for gathering and the thing itself, but one feels it to be a good maxim to tell people to be cautious about what they accept from those who talk much about Greek to those who do not understand Greek. To such it is the fox escaping under cover where they may lose the game though still on the scent.

But from your remarks one would question if you were even on the scent, and clearly you have not seen the game. To drop the figure, you have not caught the thought of what constitutes an assembly, or what is implied in gathering unto the Lord's name. You could not so think and write if you ever had the experience of the Spirit of God using whom He would where believers were really gathered together. The purpose of the Lord's death was that "He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." The full result doubtless awaits a future realisation. But as there was an illustration before Pentecost of the Lord being in the midst of His own, so we have, after the Holy Spirit has come, an illustration of the children of God being gathered together before the future glory when God will "gather together in one all things in

Christ." The spring, the motive of gathering, is His love and grace. These have begotten such affection for Himself that hearts under their power are attracted to His person. Then, as the lines running from the circumference to the centre of a circle are nearer one another the nearer they approach to the centre; so, the more believers, under the power of grace, are drawn to the person of Christ, the more are they drawn to one another. The beautiful pictures in Acts ii. and iv. of the gatherings of the first Christians show how these principles were put into practice when the "multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." The love-feast, as the terms imply, was at the beginning an illustration of grace being the soul of such gatherings. The way the Corinthians were rebuked for the abuse of the love-feast, further shows that it was when love was on the wane and grace was not in full exercise that they came together not for the better, but for the worse—1 Cor. xi. 17.

But as indicated no human teaching or explanation will convey even to a believer a true idea of what gathering with the Lord in the midst implies until he has it revealed to him by the Spirit. One has heard of a heathen devotee taking a missionary round one of his gorgeous temples with its hundreds of gods and then saying with an air of pride, "These are my gods, let me see yours." In telling the story the missionary said, "I did not let him see my God, not because I had no God to show him, but because he had no eyes to see Him." It may seem strange

and sound harsh, but it is so as to the Lord in the midst, and one fears that many even among Brethren have not got eyes to see. The Lord's presence in the midst of His gathered saints will only be questioned by those who have never known that presence: it will only be denied by such as have no eyes to see Him. But do not confound this presence with what may be known by an individual believer. The former is a very different thing from the latter. Faith in the individual may take hold of and enjoy that thought, "Lo, I am with you always." In a gospel or a teaching meeting the power of the Lord may be present to heal. How much godly souls may enjoy the Lord at any denominational communion is not easily described, but to see the Lord in the midst is, even from this, a very different thing. The human side of the sense of His presence might be realised at any communion. The divine side of His being known in the midst depends upon being gathered unto His name. The one may be like touching the hem of His garment; the other is more like where His heart is unveiled when Mary sits at His feet and hears His words. Yet even to this you have to add the joy, still more deep, of other hearts thrilled with the thoughts at the moment, making glad the heart of the Father and the Son. Such is true worship, and such is a real gathering with the Lord in the midst.

Once taste such communion and the idea of gathering around the Lord to conspire against Him, or put Him to death, would never come to mind as a

kindred idea to His being in the midst of His own where there is worship in Spirit and in truth. The fact that the word gathering might be applied to both does not alter the fact that the spring, motive, and kind of the *gatherings* are as opposite as the localities described by the one word *poles*. There might be a gathering of Nihilists, Socialists, or Dynamitards, as well as of loyal members of Parliament. The one class is at war with all righteous government: the other class is endeavouring to govern according to an honoured constitution; but both companies are gathered. If you speak of the members of Parliament as assembled or "*gathered*" and of the conspirators as "*met*" it is not a distinction without a difference. From what has been said it will be seen that not for a moment would one compare believers who do not meet like Brethren to the former class. But one would call attention to the fact that Christians may be merely met like members of Parliament in *cacus* instead of being assembled, or gathered with the Lord in the midst, as members are when in the right place and subject to the Speaker. The Spirit, however, must work, and love and grace constrain, if even two or three members of Christ's body are to be in reality *gathered* with the Lord in the midst.

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## BUILDED TOGETHER.

On scriptural subjects no illustrations excel those supplied by the Scriptures themselves. When these illustrations have the additional commendation that they were given on purpose by God we do well to give them the more earnest consideration. For instance, the Spirit says, "even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast." After this to think that the ordinance of the Passover supplies no principles and instruction for our guidance in connection with the Lord's Supper would be to set aside Scripture. Who would deny the application when it has been given so explicitly by the Holy Spirit?

Have we anything like this on gathering together? Does Scripture itself illustrate this important subject? Have we any type of gathering as we have in the passover a type of the Lord's Supper? No one can doubt it for a moment who considers what Paul writes about being "buidled together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"—Eph. ii. 22. In this and what he says about "the building fitly framed together," and in his frequent use of the temple as a figure, one sees that these things among God's people of old were figures of the Christian assembly, and afford direct teaching on the subject of gathering. A glance at the way the Tabernacle



was put together to form a dwelling place for God in the midst of His people will show distinctly that it was simply a material pattern of what was to be accomplished in a spiritual way when believers were gathered together with the Lord in the midst. The object of the tabernacle was to provide a dwelling-place for God while the people were in the wilderness. The gathering together of believers now with the Lord in the midst is to own what is due to the Lord from a redeemed people and to leave room for Him to minister unto them by the Spirit while they are on the way to that grand foregathering, when without spot or wrinkle He shall present the Church to Himself in glory—Eph. v. 27.

The first thing in a building is the foundation. In the tabernacle this consisted of one hundred sockets of silver—Ex. xxvi. 19-25. This silver was the ransom money given by rich and poor alike, half a shekel for each, as “atonement” money for their souls. The whole was devoted to the service of the tabernacle—Ex. xxxviii. 25-28. Thus the hundred silver blocks, each of about one hundred and fourteen pounds weight, on which the structure rested, clearly told that everything was founded on redemption. But Christians are “not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,” “but with the precious blood of Christ”—1 Pet. i. 18-19. In the habitation for God, now as of old, however, everything is made to depend upon redemption. Mixed worshippers of saved and unsaved, of redeemed and not redeemed, show that ordinary congregations are wrong at the very foundation and that they have no scriptural

claim to be regarded as proper Christian assemblies. It is not a question of failure in *practice*. This may happen wherever the responsibility of man is involved. But many denominations fail in proceeding on a wrong *principle*. Some make membership depend on ordinances: others throw the responsibility on the person by accepting his profession: Scripture makes the standing of every one in what is to be God's dwelling-place depend on his having been personally redeemed by the blood of Christ. Before anyone can be gathered he must have been redeemed. The silver sockets which typified redemption were the first things laid on the sands of the desert. God never dwelt, as we have seen, in the midst of the people till they were redeemed. So the foundation of His habitation has always a connection with redemption.

After the sockets, in the tabernacle, came the boards which stood upon them to form the walls of God's habitation. The forty-eight boards, like the ark and the table of shew-bread, were made of shittum-wood and overlaid with gold. The ark represented Christ, and these boards of the same materials set forth that believers who were to form the habitation for God were His workmanship. They were thus made suitable for and in harmony with Himself. The wood, the most incorruptible which could be found, represented the humanity of Christ: whilst the gold, with which the boards were overlaid, set forth the divine righteousness which the believer is made in Christ. Thus each board, standing on the silver sockets and overlaid with gold, showed

that those forming God's habitation were redeemed and made the righteousness of God in Christ. Such qualifications are not expected or looked for in connection with the most of the churches of men. Scripture is clear, however, and the type is instructive, in regard to what God requires as to those who would gather round the person of His Son. There ought to be divine natures, the persons having been born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

When the sockets and boards were prepared and erected, a pin and a cord secured the latter in their place. So when the word of truth is believed souls are rendered divinely secure by being sealed with the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption—Eph. iv. 30. To stop short at this point, or to make this the great aim of service, or the only desire in the way of conscious enjoyment on the part of the believer would miss God's purpose in all that has been wrought. The blessing, or the enjoyment, of the believer would thus be made the end in view instead of God receiving a dwelling-place and the worship due unto His name.

Besides being so complete and beautiful in themselves, the boards of the tabernacle were divinely adapted for being builded together. All the fitness they possessed was with the view to their being joined together to form God's habitation. Here is what is so much overlooked in the churches of men. The way these churches are formed, the work they undertake, and the means used, alike show that the divine purpose of an habitation for God has not been the controlling thought which brought the

members of them together. These churches assume that there are many bodies. The reason and will of men, and human ideas, determine what form their churches will assume. They consult their own imaginations and trust in human wisdom instead of simply being obedient to the Word of God, and in faith, owning what God has formed by the Holy Spirit. In the building of the tabernacle, the example and shadow of heavenly things, Moses was admonished three times to make everything according to the pattern shown to him on the mount. There was not merely a plan and specifications, but there was a perfect model which left no room for design, alteration or thought on the part of men. He had simply to hear, see, know, and obey what had been revealed by God. So now, in the habitation through the Spirit, everything has been thought of and provided for in connection with the Christian assembly. What is required is faith and obedience in accordance with what the Holy Spirit is doing in quickening the dead, sealing the living, and gathering believers together around the Lord as those who have been made members of His body. Only thus as they learn, yield to, and recognize the unity of the Spirit can they answer to the purpose of God in being builded together for His Habitation.

Some of the sons of Merari might be unduly magnifying their own part in connection with the tabernacle. One party might be altogether taken up with the silver sockets, another with the golden covered boards, and still another with the pillars. They would thus be occupied with the *means* rather than

the *end*, or complete design God had in view. Such is what we see around us even among the most earnest and devoted Christians and servants of the Lord. One class thinks only of the conversion of souls, another gets occupied with work among the young, and a third seeks to promote harmony and happiness in the congregation. Further down some are absorbed with the music or the service; others with the finances or the building; others in philanthropic and temperance work are labouring, as in the fire, to cast sockets of lead, to make boards of paper, and to secure what they have done by a pledge.

Scripture, God's thoughts and purposes in connection with the habitation of the Spirit have never been understood, or preparatory work, or work which produces no real preparation for spiritual worship, would not fill up so much of the time and occupy the energies of so many church members. It is no better, if one could imagine such a thing, than, as if a wealthy nobleman desired the fellowship of his friends at a feast, and the servants only thought of the invitations or opening the outer door to the guests and no provision were made or concern manifested with regard to what the host intended to enjoy in the fellowship of his friends. This was the great end in view. To be occupied with, or stop short of; anything less, however necessary or important, would be to fail to carry out the will, and come short of answering to the affection in the heart, of the nobleman. This, however, is only a feeble illustration of the way in which many of the most earnest Christians are engaged. The thought of forming a habi-

tation for God and giving to Him, from hearts surcharged with blessing, the worship in Spirit and in truth for which the Father seeketh worshippers, has had very little place in their plans and services. The blessing of men is a laudable object. The worshipping of God is a nobler purpose. The latter is above the former as God is higher than man. The casting of the sockets, the making of the boards, and the fitting together of the tabernacle were only means to an end. The dwelling in the tabernacle and the filling it with the glory of the Lord were the accomplishment of God's purpose. In like manner, respectively, we ought to view the conversion of sinners and the gathering together of saints. We should ever keep before us the thought that God's purpose is to find for Himself a habitation.

Different little companies of the sons of Merari might have vied with each other as to which company might obtain the most of the sockets or the boards of the tabernacle to set up in the various places or ways they had chosen. If they were setting up a few boards here, and some more there, all over the camp, it would be clear that they were thinking of themselves rather than of God. His thought was to have all builded together; instead of this, they have the materials of the tabernacle scattered abroad. God was seeking to set forth His glory: the sons of Merari are occupied with their own. Having lost or forgotten the original purpose for which the materials were prepared, in their zeal to outstrip others and make a show, they might soon produce imitation sockets and boards and go further

towards the constructing of many tabernacles till the structures were as numerous as churches and chapels in a modern city. But where would have been the true tabernacle amid all this confusion? It would not have been found. The pillar of cloud would still have been without a dwelling-place. Though still careing for and working amongst His people, God would not have owned any of the false tabernacles by placing in them the symbol of His presence. Some of the structures would have had more, others less, and some none at all, of the true materials. What would have then been the right thing to do? Some would say pull these structures down and begin again. This is just what has been attempted by every new denomination from the Church of Rome down to the Salvation Army. What has been the result? Confusion instead of harmony: scattering abroad instead of gathering together: the churches of men instead of the Church of God. Well, what ought to be done? What might some son of Merari, who was tired and grieved by the emulation, strifes and divisions of his brethren, do amid all the confusion? The right thing, the best thing, he could do, would be to consult Moses who had the pattern shown to him on the mount. Then the purpose, design and specifications of the tabernacle as God thought of it may be found in what Moses has written. He proceeds to enquire and examine. Having become acquainted with the thoughts and purpose of God he would seek to instruct his brethren. Then the rival claims of the various structures would be loudly asserted, each disproving that of the

other, and all the contenders only agreed in their denunciations of the only person who has God's mind on the matter. So long as he was ready to fall in with them or even to begin another of his own his brethren were friendly. When he stands for God and withstands them all, as having departed from God's design, they all withstand him. He may be accused of setting up his own opinions, or they may think him a fit subject for pity and deplore that one they were wont to respect should be losing opportunities of usefulness and really throwing away his talents by running after a mere idea or by being caught with a craze. But what is the truth of the matter? This Levite has learned God's mind and though all are against him, one man with God is in the majority. It may require faith to see it, and to maintain him in that position, but happy is he who has God's mind and approval, though he may require to be content with apparently little success. He has given up his own will and plans for God's. So now a believer may wake up to a sense of what is due to the Lord amid the confusion of Christendom. He may never succeed in persuading his brethren to cease building or gathering according to their own thoughts. He can, however, keep the right purpose of that which now answers to the tabernacle ever in view; he can see that the right materials alone are used; he can maintain the right place or ground where the one structure God has designed should be formed; he can acknowledge that there is confusion and that the right materials are scattered abroad; he can endeavour to act upon what is written, refus-



ing everything not enjoined in the Word, and as he seeks to practice all he finds there, the Lord can be with him and the two or three who gather unto His name. Instead of going on with "other Christian bodies" or allowing that Christians have any right to have "their churches," as expressed in the *Catechism*, these believers can "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

What this "unity of the Spirit" means is very imperfectly understood. Denominations have ideals and unities of their own. They must be their own when they differ from one another and in so many points also differ from Scripture. We have seen that one body was formed at Pentecost by the coming of the Holy Ghost, and that there is the one body now, consisting of all believers on earth as united to the Lord and to one another by the one Holy Spirit. This describes the standing of the body of Christ as we might speak of the standing of the believer as cleared before God of everything against him on the ground of the perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ. But one so cleared by God might not be enjoying what he ought to enjoy, or he might not be acting or walking as becomes a believer. He would not then be in a good *state* of soul, though this would not alter his *standing* in acceptance with God. It is the believer's responsibility to see that his state answers to his standing. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk ye in him"—Col. ii. 6. This may help towards the understanding of what is meant by "the unity of the Spirit" which we are responsible to keep. This

unity is the right practical state which would answer to the standing of the one body. It implies earnest desire and some success in carrying out the various duties devolving on those who are "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

As comprehensively put by another in his Synopsis of the Epistle to the Ephesians:—"At the end of chapter ii. the apostle had unfolded the result of the work of Christ in uniting the Jew and Gentile, in making peace, and in thus forming the dwelling-place for God on the earth (Jew and Gentile having access to God by one Spirit through the mediation of Christ, both being reconciled to God in one body). *To have access to God; to be the dwelling-place of God through His presence by the Holy Ghost; to be one body reconciled to God—such is the vocation of Christians.* Chapter iii. had developed this in its whole extent. The apostle applies it in chapter iv.

The faithful were to seek—in the spirit of humility and meekness, forbearance with one another in love—to maintain this unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There are three things in this exhortation—Eph. iv. 1-3—first, to walk worthy of their calling; second, the spirit in which they were to do so; third, diligence in maintaining the unity of the Spirit by the bond of peace. It is important to observe that this unity of the Spirit is not similarity of sentiment, but the oneness of the members of the body of Christ established by the Holy Ghost maintained practically by a walk according to the Spirit of grace. It is evident that the diligence required for the

maintenance of the unity of the Spirit relates to the earth and to the manifestation of this unity on the earth." The complete and perfect manifestation awaits other scenes, but the Lord has made it possible for a few to act aright and have His approval though the great mass may have departed from the true ground.

We see what the maintaining of God's thoughts implied in connection with the tabernacle. The structure was erected in all its details as the Lord commanded Moses. The pattern he saw in the mount and the various laws in connection with the offerings in which he was instructed give us what God desired respecting His dwelling-place. When the people answered to these by maintaining the services, keeping the feasts, and worshipping in the holiness which becomes God's House for ever, they were endeavouring to keep *the unity of the economy* by which they were brought into relationship with God. Type has now given place to reality; the earthly people have given way to the heavenly people; the Shekinah on the mercy-seat in the tabernacle has yielded to the Lord's own presence where two or three are gathered unto His name. As they realize the ruined state of things through the failure of the Church in man's hand, and also keep before them what the Church, as the habitation for God, is, in His purpose, they will use diligence in keeping clear of merely human arrangements and associations, and will endeavour, by gathering unto the Lord alone, to answer to His thoughts and meet His heart,

where in holy obedience they can worship in Spirit and in truth. Only such believers as act in this way can be truly said to keep the Lord's word and not deny His name, or attain the object for which they were builded together.

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## SPIRITUAL MINISTRY.

Q. What is the Brethren idea of Ministry in their assemblies?

A. "All is open to the guidance of the Holy Ghost at the time, so that he who believes himself to be so led of the Spirit may address the meeting."

Q. Prove from 1 Cor. xii. 20 that this was never intended to imply that every brother was to teach.

A. The Apostle asks, "Are all teachers?" implying they were not.

Q. Can you prove from the testimony of "C.H.M." that even the Brethren themselves admit the evil results of this theory?

A. Yes, Mr. McIntosh says: "Alas, alas, we often see men on their feet in the midst of our assemblies whom common sense, to say nothing of spirituality, would keep in their seats."

Q. Are not those who have gifts, to exercise them in the Church?

A. Yes, but unless all have this liberty, where is there room for open ministry?

Q. Has God not given special gifts to the Church in the form of teachers? (Eph. iv. 11-13.) Why have Brethren no ministers or elders ordained in their Churches? (Acts xx. 28.)

A. Because they do not believe in human election and ordination.

Q. Prove from Scripture that election to office in the Church by the people was practised in the days of the apostles.

A. It is plainly stated in Acts i. 15-26; Acts vi. 1-7.

Q. Do you then believe in man-made Ministry?

A. No, but I believe in God-given ministers." (Eph. iv. 11-13.)

Q. Can you prove clearly that others besides the apostles ordained?

A. Yes, Timothy, Titus, and others (Acts xiii. 1, 2), ordained individuals.

Q. Do chapters i.-iv. of the Book of Revelation prove that one minister presided over each congregation of the seven Churches of Asia Minor?

A. Yes, for each minister is addressed as "the angel."

Q. State briefly what our study of the Word has disclosed on this subject.

A. (1) There is no authority for every brother to teach (1 Cor. xii. 20). (2) God has given ministers to the Church, and those who are taught in the Word are "to communicate with him that teacheth in all good things." This text implies a stated ministry. (3) Ministers and elders are to be ordained. (4) All believers are to work for Christ.—*Mr. M'Lennan's Catechism.*

Your chapter on Ministry is confusion worse confounded. You do not distinguish between the *manifestations* of the Spirit in the assembly and *ministry* by one who may have the gift of a teacher and who

may exercise his gift in meetings called by himself when those present do not form an assembly gathered unto the Lord's name. The simplest believer in a proper assembly may be the Spirit's mouthpiece to utter "fine words" of praise, or to give out a hymn, or to call attention to suitable Scriptures, or to give thanks and break the bread, or to engage in prayer. "Every man," "any man," "ye all," except women, might speak "one by one"—1 Cor. xii. 7, 11; xiv. 5, 19, 24, 27, 31. Even women are included in their proper functions when the whole body, according to the effectual working in the measure of EVERY PART, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love—Eph. iv. 16. This is what you call "the Brethren idea of Ministry in their assemblies," but it is simply the Scriptural idea which ordinary congregations with you quite ignore. You say, "the Apostle asks 'Are all teachers'—1 Cor. xii 28—implying they were not," and "that this was never intended to imply that every brother was to teach." But Scripture does say, as we have seen, that every brother might speak. A teacher was a "gift," but every brother was not a "gift." The teacher does not take his place in the assembly as a teacher, but as a member of the body, and every brother is there on the same footing. You connect ministry with a person, "the minister," while Scripture connects it in the assembly with "the manifestation of the Spirit, given to every man to profit withal." There may be a real assembly and "the manifestation of the Spirit" where there is no special gift. Without the latter a few simple be-

lievers may gather unto the Lord. If so gathered they have the Holy Ghost though they may not have amongst them any who are what Scripture calls "gifts." Let there be faith and real dependence and they will be led, guided, and controlled, by the Spirit. The three chapters—1 Cor. xii., xiii., xiv.—are against any class of men, such as are called "ministers," usurping the place which these Scriptures show to belong exclusively to the Holy Spirit in assembly meetings. The common practice, even at communions, of one man guiding and controlling the whole from first to last is simply man displacing the Holy Ghost. Scripture shows that things were otherwise even where apostles were present. All the manifestations are by the one Spirit, and it is quite a mistake to think that because the Spirit is not mentioned in chapter xiv. that the speaking there described is not by the Spirit. Indeed the three chapters ought to be taken together as treating on one subject. That subject is explicitly stated as "Speaking by the Spirit of God." Chapter xii. gives the *principle*, chapter xiii. gives the *spring*, Chapter xiv. gives the *practice* of the Spirit's action in the assembly. Some would say that because there is no speaking with tongues now that these chapters do not apply. It is true that we have neither the speaking with tongues, nor by revelation, but the Spirit abides. He controlled what was there at the beginning and He does so now where there is faith to count upon His presence and action. This is the characteristic, the essential, feature of the assembly. Observe this liberty, not for man, but for the Spirit,

is in the worship meeting and has not reference specially to those who are gifts or teachers but to all except the women. "If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister let him do it as of the ability which God giveth." This then is the Lord's will and Word. Where is there the acknowledgment of this, or the endeavour to carry it out when congregations are together? With them there is next to no distinction between a preaching and a worship meeting. It is clear the liberty was not at the beginning a thing arranged or permitted on certain rare occasions. It was an essential feature of the worship meeting. But where among denominations is there such a purely worship meeting with such liberty for "the manifestation of the Spirit?" It cannot be found.

But there are special gifts, "evangelists," "pastors," "teachers"—Eph. iv. 11-13. The work of the evangelist is connected with the conversion of sinners in the world, and introducing them when converted into the assembly. The pastor's work is to care for the sheep of the Lord's flock. The teacher is more occupied with the unfolding and imparting of the truth. These gifts may be, though rarely, combined in one individual. They are usually, in their highest forms, possessed separately by different persons. The minister with you is expected to be evangelist, pastor, and teacher, and has frequently to do the work of an elder and a deacon. Thus besides confusing the gifts, there is confusion between *gift* and *office*. The "minister" is expected to do the work of a gift and an officer till, poor man,



he has thrust upon him the different kinds of work which properly belong to four or five persons. It would not have been thus had human arrangement and appointment not set aside the leading of the Spirit and the controlling of the Lord. If all were left to Him many would not be ministering who are meddling with ministry, and many would be ministering, in their proper functions, who are not led out now owing to man's will having set aside God's order. There is no such thing in Scripture as the evangelist of an assembly or a congregation. The evangelist's sphere is the world. He exercises his gift in responsibility to the Lord without being tied to any place or set of persons, or any single assembly. Pastors and teachers, on the other hand, find their sphere among the believers who are, or ought to be, in assemblies. But even these gifts were never given to any single assembly or congregation. They were given to the "whole body." There were such gifts *in the church* that was at Antioch, but they were not *settled there*. They were liable to be sent anywhere by the Holy Ghost—Acts xiii. 1-4. No single congregation or assembly could claim them. What is more they were never *ordained* to their work. In the case before us, "When they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." This was not *ordination to the ministry*. They "*ministered to the Lord*" *before*, so that the laying on of hands was not connected with *making them* ministers, but because they *were such already*. Ordination to the ministry with you takes place only *once* with the same person. This scriptural practice of praying and

laying on of hands may be done to the same person as often as he is sent forth to any special work. Brethren would not ordain, but they would thus commend to the Lord a servant who felt called to go forth in the Lord's name. They might do this to the same person on different occasions. It seems that it was so with Paul and Barnabas—Acts xiii. 3; xv. 40. But if this was ordination, who ordained, and to what? The less must have ordained the greater. This overthrows the theory of ordination as applied to "gifts." But God's way is the reverse of man's. Men qualify, then appoint: God appoints, then qualifies. If it is a king, or an apostle—David or Paul—or any real servant now, he is first chosen of God and then fitted for his sphere and service. Then with you ordination only takes place usually when a congregation gives a young man "a call." Here at Antioch instead of the congregational call, the Lord says that it is "for the work whereunto I have called them." They go, not because a congregation has called, and the Presbytery has ordained them, but as "being sent forth by the Holy Ghost." The Lord gives the "gifts" and as Lord He directs and controls them instead of any Synod, Presbytery, or Conference. Each gift is directly responsible, not to any Bishop, Synod, Presbytery, or Conference, but to the Lord Himself. But with you a person may be a "God-given minister," yet unless he has gone through a prescribed course and is also a "man-made" minister he is not recognized. He may even finish the last jot and tittle of that course and be by the General Assembly recommended for

license, as was the case with myself, and if, on the principle of holding his commission direct from the Head, he objects to be a "man-made" minister, as was also done by myself, he will not be recognized by the Presbyterian Church. On the other hand, a "man-made minister," whether he be a God-given minister, or be acting like one, or not, is recognized. It is usual at Presbytery meetings to recognize and associate, by putting his name in the minutes, any minister who may be present as a visitor. It once happened, after having finished my studies, that I visited a Presbytery where the members had had proof from their brethren that there had been about one hundred and fifty conversions in another town through my instrumentality. Attention was called to my presence with the proposal that I should be associated. This was settled as not to be, by it being said, "we recognize none but ministers." The minutes of a previous meeting had just been read. They contained the name of a visiting minister who was abroad for the church's good, and the name of another of whom there were grave doubts if he was sound in the faith. It has now been proved that he was not sound. That Presbytery did recognize what was "man-made," though it was not free to own what it could not deny was God-given. This is not mentioned in the way of censure, but in proof of the point that human arrangements stand in the way of the recognition of God-given ministry. Another illustration happened near Dunedin years ago. Through the Lord's blessing on my labours there about forty persons were converted, Christians

were helped, and a church formed. On the communion day an ordained minister had to come and preside. An old Christian set me a thinking on the following day. He said, "Now, we would all have been better pleased if you had just broken the bread yourself yesterday." He was told that I was not an ordained man. But he asked, "Have you not been the means of these people being converted? Have we older Christians not been helped by your breaking the bread of life among us?" It was replied that I trusted it was so. Then following up his point he said, "Do you not see that the Lord has trusted you with the real thing, yet here is an organisation which does not allow you to touch the symbols? What do you make of that?" This was felt indeed to be rather difficult to answer satisfactorily. The answer never was found till, years afterwards, I was outside every denomination and inside where Brethren seek to own the assembly of God. However they may fail, they do endeavour to leave room for all God has given, or written in His Word, and especially in regard to real ministry.

We have observed the difference between special gifts and the manifestations of the Spirit through any member of the body. There is also an important distinction in Scripture between *gift* and *office*. In denominations this is not observed. An elder is an officer. The teacher is given to the whole Church of God and is a teacher everywhere. An elder is only an elder in an assembly in a certain place as he might be an elder where you are at Akaroa, but he would not be one where I write at Wellington. If

you are an evangelist, a pastor, or teacher, you are such everywhere as well as at Akaroa. The elder, as holding office, was ordained in the assembly where he resided. The evangelist, the pastor, or the teacher, in Scripture, was not as such *ordained*, or *settled*, or looked upon as a *placed man* in any assembly or locality. There was ordination to *office*, but there was not any ordination of *gift*. The latter was bestowed by the Head, and the Lord did not permit anything to come between, so that the gift was always directly responsible to Himself. It was the seeing of this scriptural principle that prevented me from taking license when I finished my studies under the Melbourne Presbytery. It might have been proved by those converted through my labours, in many parts, that I was a gift, but the same facts would show that, as not having been settled in any locality, I could not be an elder. These in Scripture are connected with an assembly in a locality. Paul and Barnabas "ordained them elders in every church"—Acts xiv. 23. Paul writes to Titus that he had left him to "ordain elders in every city"—Tit. i. 5. In this there was apostolic power, or power conferred on the delegate of an Apostle. Except by the one or the other we have no ordination, nor any Scripture giving us now the power to ordain. The laying on of hands at Antioch was not ordination; though always confused with it—Acts xiii. 1-4. Timothy is told, "the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also"—2 Tim. ii. 2. There is here no word of ordination. What is more it is a ques-

tion of teaching rather than appointing to office. But young men from a college are untried and just the opposite of what Scripture means by "faithful men." This text, therefore, does not warrant *training for the ministry*, any more than *ordination*. There was a sense in which elders, overseers, or bishops (for they are all one), were to "feed the Church of God"—Acts xx. 28. The elder or bishop in Scripture was in a different position from modern bishops. There were *several* bishops in the one assembly at Ephesus and in the one assembly at Philippi—Phil. i. 1. Now one bishop has to be both a gift and an officer in a number of assemblies. So there is confusion all round. You also say that "Ministers and elders are to be ordained." Gifts were not ordained, and to ordain elders you want the power, the men, and the assembly. The power which was Apostolic is gone. The men who might be the God-given elders in a place possibly do not belong to your congregation. The assembly of the place consists of all the Christians in it. They are scattered in different denominations. There is therefore no proper assembly now in which to ordain officers, and the ministers who may be real gifts should not have been ordained at all, much less tied down to different single congregations.

You say, "Chapters i.-iv. of the book of revelation prove that one minister presided over each congregation of the seven churches of Asia Minor, for each minister is addressed as 'the angel.'" We read, "The *mystery* of the seven stars which thou sawest . . . are the angels of the seven churches,"

and they are held in the "right hand" of the risen and ascended Jesus. Now the angel is a *mystery*, but if the angel means the minister there is no mystery. Scripture elsewhere is silent as to any such personage as the one now called "the minister." But indeed two "ministers" are mentioned. Paul and Barnabas "had also John to be their minister"—Acts xiii. 5. This was a congregation of two, and the church officer, instead of ushering in Paul and Barnabas to the pulpit, must have taken the pulpit himself. It seems however that he soon resigned his charge—v. 13. The other minister mentioned is a woman. Rightly rendered Rom. xvi. 1 reads, "But I commend to you Phœbe, our sister, who is minister of the church which is at Cenchrea." That might have been the "Primitive," but it could not have been the Presbyterian, church at Cenchrea. Gifts there are and many called ministers are really the gifts of an ascended Saviour, but they are such apart from any human choice, ordination, or appointment. We find angel used in Scripture for the mystical representative of a person not seen. When Rhoda affirmed that "Peter stood before the gate." "Then said they, It is his angel"—Acts xii. 13-15. They meant that it was not a real person, but the representative of one not seen. It would not suit the minister for him to be unseen. He does not "want to be an angel" of this kind, nor do the people appreciate such a mystical president. It would be better and easier to have faith in the Spirit's presence as a person, controlling ministry in

the assembly and guiding individual gifts as they might be exercised according to the word in simple dependence on the Lord. Instead of ordaining elders when we are not certain of having the power, the right men, or the proper assembly in a given place, the two or three who gather unto the Lord's name can fall back on the provision for elders found in the word. There are no elders mentioned in connection with the Church at Corinth. But the Apostle says, "I beseech you, brethren (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us and laboureth"—1 Cor. xvi. 15-16. So now, there are those into whose hearts the Lord puts a desire to care for His own. Such are to be owned, and though elders are not ordained, the work is done, and office and gift are left and used just as they are found in Scripture. The fact of failure in the assemblies, or even if Brethren were set aside altogether as a testimony, cannot alter divine principles, as these are given in God's Word. With you I condemn "evil results" in their *practices*, but I am against you when you wish to condemn the *principles* of Brethren with regard to the action of the Spirit in the assembly and the exclusive right of the Lord to direct and control the ministry of individual gifts. The Lord has never failed in bestowing "gifts." All the failure has been through the meddling and muddling of men who lack faith in, and dependence upon, God.



## THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH.

If Brethren directed their zeal and efforts *only* to the conversion of the unsaved, there would be no need for this summary of their views on Church government, but inasmuch as their avowed mission is proselytism as well, then my conscience gave me no rest until I performed this duty of faithfully and justly representing these views to the Christian public. I deeply regret this necessity has arisen, as my deepest heart-felt desire is to see all Christians united in the bonds of Christian love and holy fellowship. And to my mind a terrible responsibility rests upon those who are dividing God's people into small exclusive sects instead of seeking to bind them more closely to one another. Whilst always cherishing a spirit of love towards brethren, we are commanded to "prove all things;" and hold fast that which is good (1 Thess. v. 21).—*Mr. M'Lennan's Catechism.*

No one will question the "heart-felt desire to see all Christians united in the bonds of Christian love and holy fellowship." But a great many must question *the way* in which you propose to bring it about. While you condemn "small exclusive sects" you tolerate larger sects and desire that they should be friendly while maintaining their divisions. You say, "prove all things, hold fast that which is good." You have proved *Sectarianism* to be contrary to Scripture, and said that it is "from beneath," yet you hold it fast after showing that it is not good. We want example as well as precept, practice as

well as preaching, and to have any weight there must be consistency. Above all, to influence the godly, there must be the teaching and authority of God's Word. But that Word, and faith in it, and obedience to it, have a very small place in the fellowship you propose. It cannot be a "holy fellowship" which shows that divisions are unscriptural and yet proposes that they should be maintained. With you unity is "not by separation (from divisions) but 'forbearing one another in love.'" We are to "love the truth;" to "speak the truth in love;" to "obey the truth," and to be acceptable it must be "the obedience of faith" — God's Word must be *heard, believed, obeyed*. "And this is love that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it"—2 John 6. What have we then as to fellowship at the beginning? To know this and do it will be God's way of "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," and to act "in the obedience of faith." You speak of "*seeking* to bind" and hence your unity is *not* seen as *accomplished*. God speaks of our "endeavouring to *keep*" a unity which He has *already produced*. God's subsisting fact is the ground of our present duty. What is required of us is "the obedience of faith."

When we look back to Pentecost we see what was done at the beginning. The thousands converted "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" — Acts ii. 42. Here therefore we have four charac-

teristic features of the newly-formed Church of God. There was, (1) the apostles' doctrine; (2) the apostles' fellowship; (3) the breaking of bread; and (4) united prayers. In the freshness and joy of first love they had the Lord's supper every day—*v.* 46. For a time as the thousands increased the real fellowship increased. We cannot now form any adequate conception of what was enjoyed by the early Christians, much less can we enter into what was presented to the eye and made glad the heart of God, when "the whole multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul"—Acts *iv.* 32. There was then, however, less room for faith, than when further on, the early Christians were more in their normal state. The word of the Lord, and the affection of His heart, were still the springs of their conduct. This is witnessed where the gospel was carried among the Gentiles. When Paul comes to Troas, it is said, "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them"—Acts *xx.* 7. The *purpose* of their coming together was not to hear preaching, but to break bread. The preaching was the *accidental* thing: the breaking of bread was that which *characterised* their coming together. In ordinary congregations this is now quite reversed. The preaching is the controlling thought. Even real believers habitually neglect to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread. When it is done it is in most cases very far from being according to Scripture. Worship also with many is mainly the receiving of what may help and comfort the believer, and

this is all mixed up with the preaching of the gospel to unbelievers. In Scripture worship is always what goes from man to God: ministry is properly what comes from God to man. In the assembly gathered unto the Lord's name there is room for both, but preaching as it is carried on in ordinary congregations has no place in a proper assembly.

It becomes us to see that we are acting according to the Word. The apostle of the Gentiles, writing by the Spirit, says, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ . . . and keep the ordinances as I delivered them unto you"—1 Cor. xi. 1-2.

In the little while between, and His coming again, the Lord looks for affection and remembrance. "Continue ye in my love." "Do this in remembrance of me." "Ye do show the Lord's death till He come." He would have the hearts of those who will form His bride to be owning their relationship to Himself and to one another as members of the one body. This oneness, formed by the Holy Ghost coming to the earth, was the mystery kept secret since the world began, but now "according to the command of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith"—Rom. xvi. 25-26. It is nowhere manifested. Outwardly everything is broken and in confusion and ruin. But faith can see and own the oneness and answer to it in obedience and joy. The mystery is discerned and finds a practical expression when, in the Lord's Supper, the one bread, or one loaf, is used as a divinely given symbol of the one body. "For we, being many, are one loaf, and one body; for we are all partakers of that

one loaf"—1 Cor. x. 16-17. Thus the early Christians owned the oneness when they came together on the first day of the week to break bread—Acts xx. 7. All the Christians in the place were looked upon as the body of Christ in that place. Thus at Corinth, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular"—1 Cor. xii. 27. Of them it was said, "If therefore the whole Church be come together into one place"—1 Cor. xiv. 23. When so gathered by the Spirit, owning Christ as the Head, and themselves as members of the one body, they owned all in every other place who were members of the one body as indwelt by the one Spirit. Christ Himself was the centre, and the Spirit was the power of gathering, and when thus together in assembly, there was liberty for "That one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will"—1 Cor. xii. 11. "For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted"—1 Cor. xiv. 31. There was no attempt to make a church, nor a place given to any man as "the minister," or any room left for choice, or appointment according to man's will. They simply owned what the Lord had formed by the Spirit, answering to it in "the obedience of faith." Meetings for preaching the gospel, or teaching believers, might be called and carried on by servants in their individual responsibility; but when it was a meeting of the assembly for worship, edification, prayer or discipline, all were on a level as members of the one body. Any other way of being associated, through agreement in doctrine, form of government and the mode of adminis-

tering an ordinance, the manner of worship, other than that of simply owning what the Spirit has formed is not "the obedience of faith." However good the system, or however real and devoted the members, it is a human arrangement, and not the divine work of the Spirit of God. For believers not to be worshipping with intelligence, and in "the obedience of faith" is a very serious matter.

After having been lost for centuries, the truths concerning the presence of the Holy Ghost, the Church as the body of Christ, and the hope of the Lord's coming, have been brought out afresh from the Word. When we think of the Church, as seen by the Lord, to be the pearl of greatest price, it must be grieving to the Spirit and dishonouring to the Lord, when those to whom He has thus told out the thoughts so dear to His heart, treat them lightly or with indifference. Such conduct must be to their shame and loss, and no light sin. The Lord can go on with ignorance where the heart is true to Himself and the conscience undefiled; but to receive knowledge, or to have the opportunity of being enlightened, and not to follow on to know, and keep a good conscience by acting according to the light received, must bring leanness to the soul, and cause the light to become darkness, if it does not also bring upon the wilful one chastening from the hand of the Lord. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." For anyone to have the knowledge of what the Lord is now doing by the presence of the Holy Ghost on the earth in gathering out a people for His name, and to act contrary to the fact

that "by one Spirit we are all baptised into one body" is to go on in *the disobedience of unbelief*, instead of answering in "the obedience of faith."

After what has thus come before us which is it to be in future? The obedience of faith, or the disobedience of unbelief? "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, 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 heavens over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land"—Hag. i. 5-11.

It does not require much learning or penetration to see how these striking words apply to believers now who are seeking their own profit, and neglecting what answers to the House of the Lord. There is no special place now like Jerusalem, nor any earthly house like the Temple. But God has made the Lord Jesus the centre of gathering; and of those indwelt by His Spirit and members of His body, he has said, "Ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"—Eph. ii. 22. Instead of

owning what the Spirit has formed, and of acting in worship and remembering the Lord, as those gathered unto Him, believers are seeking their own blessing, or helping their special cause, or church, while the Lord is left to deplore that His House lieth waste. How often do believers complain of dry sermons, formal, wordy, empty prayers? Instead of finding instruction, refreshment and strength, they say they often return to their homes with an aching void in their hearts, and increased tendency to fretfulness and murmuring. With all the effort among old and young in preaching, teaching and tract distributing, how is there so little real abiding blessing? "Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house." The secret of all is in the fact that Christians have made their own profit or blessing, or the blessing of others, their *first concern*, and have neglected the worship due to the Lord, and His claims on them in connection with their being "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." With the remnant returned from Babylon, it was found that the Lord said, "From the day that the foundation of the Lord's Temple was laid," "from this day will I bless you." So now, as always with God, it must be first obedience, and then blessing. Give first, in worship, what is due unto the Lord, and then our own blessing is sure to follow. In making our own blessing the first object, we must find that we are really putting it away from us, whereas, if what is due to the Lord is first, our highest blessing is secured. "Them that honour



me, I will honour." Let the Lord, His Spirit, and His word, have their place, and that word will test all our associations.

Study 1 Cor. xii. and xiv., and see if, when and where you meet for worship or as believers for edification, there be what answers to what was practised at the beginning, as shown in these chapters. "The minister," or a person appointed to officiate, cannot be found there. The Holy Ghost is owned as present. Jesus is called, and acknowledged as, Lord. There is no special place given or taken by any one man. Neither can you find the members of this or that denomination. "The body is one, and hath many members, but all the members of that one body being many are one body." They are not assembled as a sect, but as "The body of Christ and members in particular." It is not said that the Spirit is given to *one man*, but "to every man to profit withal," and "ye all may prophesy one by one" There is liberty not for one or any man, but liberty for the "Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." The thought that this was done at the beginning, but that it cannot be done now is equal to thinking that Scripture is out of date, or that man can conduct or arrange things better than the Spirit of God. Though the majority have departed from worshipping according to the word, the Lord has pledged His presence to two or three gathered unto His name—Matt. xviii. 20. The things written concerning the Lord's Table, the Lord's Supper, the one body, and the assembling together where the Lord and the Spirit are owned in the exercise of ministry, or the gifts, are "The com-

mandments of the Lord," and the "ordinances" to be kept by all Christians—1 Cor. i. 2; xi. 2; xiv. 37.

Suffer a few plain questions to come home to your conscience and that of the reader in the light of what has come before us. Let each be honest with himself and the Lord, and answer unto Him. Do you know and own in the way you worship and partake of the Lord's Supper that by one Spirit you are united to a Man in heaven, and to every other man on the earth in whom the same Spirit also dwells? This divine oneness was made known for the obedience of faith. Are you aware of it and obeying it in faith? Have you been led to see it, and own it by the enlightening and constraining power of the Spirit? Can you say that you have received the way you worship from God, or has it been flesh and blood which revealed it unto you? Are you a believer, and yet neglecting the Lord's request, "Do this in remembrance of me?" If you do remember Him, is it done according to the word, and in the faith which recognises the Head and the members of His body, and the presence, control and guidance of the Spirit? Or is your church membership the result of what your parents believed? Has it arisen from your training? Have the circumstances connected with your conversion brought it about? Do you belong to a certain congregation because you get good, or for the sake of doing good, or because you think it the best kind of thing in the place? To act on any of these reasons, or with no distinct reason or principle before your mind, is very

far from seeing what has been formed by the Holy Ghost, and owning that in "the obedience of faith." The Lord has said, "If a man love me he will keep my words," and "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" The parting or dying request of one very dear to us is kept in mind and carried out with devotedness. Is it possible that one can profess to be saved through "the blood of the cross," and not endeavour to keep His words and remember the Lord who gave Himself for us? We must meet Him, and be with Him soon. How will indifference, neglect, or the following of our own will, or way, appear then? "Abide in Him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming"—1 John ii. 28. He has given us His word that we may know His will. He has given us His Spirit "that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God"—1 Cor. ii. 10-16.

Thus we can test our position. Is there the acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord? Is there the recognition of the presence of the Holy Ghost as a Person, guiding and controlling the worship? Are those who are together assembled as the members of the one body, or as the members of a sect? Has each one confidence in every other being a believer? "Do not ye judge them that are within?"—1 Cor. v. 12. Is their conduct consistent with their profession? Is there separation from all known and proved evil?—1 Cor. v. 3-8. If our position will not thus bear the light of truth, or the searching

glance of His "eyes as a flame of fire," "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." If any are uneasy in their associations it is because the eyes of the Lord are upon them. If His smile and approval are to be enjoyed, they must leave what is not according to the word and go forth unto Him.

This will bring a cross and cause us to find that we must taste rejection with Him, and suffer shame for His name. The trial will be more than made up by the sense of His present succour and approval, and the future "Well done, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"—Matt. xxv. 21. To find the truths concerning the baptism of the Holy Ghost having formed the one body, and the abiding presence of the Spirit on the earth to be still maintaining the unity, and with simplicity to own these truths in practice, will lead one outside every denomination in Christendom. To see and own these things in "the obedience of faith" implies that we gather unto the Lord *alone*, and recognise the one body of Christ. "We being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another"—Rom. xii. 5. If I profess this and yet continue a member of another body, or denomination, which may *include* many not true believers, as it must *exclude* many believers in other denominations, I am *in practice denying* the one body of Christ. A person is not, strictly speaking, a member of two denominations at the same time. He cannot answer properly to the claims upon him as a Presbyterian, and as a Wesleyan, or there would not be two deno-

minations. But there are two, and he belongs to one or the other, or else neither can claim him as a member. Thus neither can a believer rightly own in practice that he is a member of the body of Christ and at the same time own that he is a member of a denomination. But if he simply owns what the Lord by the Spirit has made him as a member of the one body, he owns all the true, and none other than the true, members of Christ's body. He thereby ceases to be a member of any sect or denomination, but owns every true believer in all denominations, though they in their positions are not owning him. He can depart from iniquity, and follow righteousness, faith, love, and peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart—2 Tim. ii. 19-22.

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## SEPARATION FROM EVIL.

We are to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv. 3), not by separation, but "forbearing one another in love."

**Q.** But does not the Bible say, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate?"

**A.** Yes, out of heathenism and idolatry; but it is a wicked perversion of Scripture to say it teaches that God's people are to come out and be separate from their churches.

Q. Prove that the Church was not free from evil in New Testament times.

A. Among the disciples Christ knew there was a Judas, Simon Magus was baptised, immorality and bad doctrine existed in Corinth and elsewhere, but the apostles did not set up other small sects like the Brethren.

Q. What is true Christian unity?

A. Individual union with Christ and fellowship in the Spirit with one another. And this may be enjoyed in any communion.

Q. Would that eminent servant of God, George Müller, be received into fellowship among exclusive Brethren?

A. No; and yet every other branch of the Christian Church would welcome him as one of God's people.—*Mr. M'Lennan's Catechism.*

Not apprehending what is implied in keeping the unity of the Spirit, you in reality urge the *breaking* rather than the *keeping* of that unity. The following from the conversation of Mr. Darby puts the matter succinctly:—

“Ephesians ii. 18 is not yet the one body, but both Jew and Gentile are together before the Father in communion, and this is ‘the unity of the Spirit.’ It begins here, but from this it goes a great deal farther.

The three great principles of the unity of the Spirit are: (1), one new man; (2), access to the Father by the Spirit; (3), builded together for an habitation.

It is the power of the Spirit which keeps saints in the *realisation* of the whole of the relationships in

which they exist in one body. This secures the manifestation of the one body on earth.

The unity of the Spirit is gone—was (gone) in Acts v., vi., but the power for the manifestation of it is here.

It is an abstract idea, and the difficulty comes from making it an absolute fact.

It is when your mind and mine go on together with the mind of the Spirit. Where we do not see together, it is not realised, but one could not say it was broken.

If you and I are quarrelling, are we doing it in the unity of the Spirit?

But, apart from all ecclesiastical ideas, I am to go on with you, and if you are naughty, I am to forbear with you in love. Then the unity of the Spirit is kept on my part, whatever it is on yours.

Two godly baptists might be morally endeavouring to keep it, but they have broken it by being strict baptists.

Taking it in its completeness, you cannot separate it from the one body.

There are three unities in John xvii.: (1), apostolic—‘one as we,’ one thought and purpose; (2), ‘one in us,’ like 1 John i. 1-4—the true fellowship of saints—is the unity of the Spirit viewed practically; (3), entirely future—unity in glory—‘perfect in one.’ ”

This conversation and your questions form a striking contrast.

If one rightly apprehends the meaning of your

questions the purport of them is simply, That toleration of evil is the way to maintain "true Christian unity" and that "that this may be enjoyed in any communion." One is scarcely prepared to believe that you really mean all you say. In charity one would be inclined to conclude that you have not weighed the consequences of such principles. As they appear to me it would be difficult to state principles more directly opposed to Scripture. Indeed if one learns from Scripture he would say that not *toleration of evil*, but *separation from evil* is God's principle of *true unity*. Of such a unity God must be the centre inasmuch as He is God. That being admitted, since He is the Holy One, the unity gathering round Him as the centre must be characterised by holiness. So soon as God speaks of such a unity, as He is truth, what is expressed will bear the marks of *absolute truth*. These things were illustrated at creation. God was the source, the centre, and the power of the unity then produced. His holiness and truth were declared when it is said that "God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good." Into that unity, which was so perfect, so beautiful, and so in harmony with God, sin entered, and death by sin, giving place to disorder, declension, and dissolution. To have true unity again, God, from the necessity of His nature, must act in one of two ways. He must either by judgment in power sweep the evil from the earth, or act in patience by grace and separate His own from the evil unto Himself. He did the latter when Enoch was caught up without tasting death; the



former, when Noah and those with him were saved from the flood which swept away the ungodly. But the case of Abraham called out from among the idolators, to walk with and worship God, is a striking illustration of how God acts to bring about the unity which will suit Himself by separation from evil. Once Abraham was thus taken up, and in and through him, the nation of Israel, the rest of the nations of the earth were left to their own will—Am. iii. 2; Acts xvii. 30. God has not two unities going on at the same time. Israel may be displaced by the Church of God, and the Church, caught up at the Lord's coming, will give place to the restoration of Israel; but in either the one or the other, separate interests, divisions, and lesser unities than the whole of what God is going on with at the time is a direct breach of the principle on which God gathers. When different centres, and various unities are maintained, either in the nation of Israel, or in the Church of God, it is, in principle, nothing less than man displacing God. It is a denial of His prerogative and an infringement of His holiness. Now, when He has said "There is one body and one Spirit," the forming and maintaining different communions and saying that "true Christian unity" "may be enjoyed in any communion" is inconsistent with holiness and truth. You have proved that such divisions are contrary to Scripture. Then they are evil, and the word is imperative, "Hold aloof from every form of wickedness," as 1 Thess. iv. 22 teaches when correctly rendered. When a believer does not know that a system is contrary to the Word, and the

conscience is good, the Lord can go on with him, but this must not be construed into a proof that the system is approved of God. Nor does the condemning of the system hinder the Lord from commending individuals in it who are walking up to their light. At the very time that the Lord shows that the leaders and the temple in Jerusalem are corrupt, He points out with the highest approval the widow who cast her two mites into the treasury. He can distinguish between a corrupt system and the devotedness of a believer who may be in it. But let light reach that believer's conscience, and if he fails to act upon it, and knowingly goes on with what is wrong, the light that is in him may become darkness, and the opposition to, and bitterness concerning, the truth refused, may prove how great is that darkness. The only safe path is to keep a good conscience and follow the light as it reaches the soul by the Word and the Spirit of God. In doing this it is possible to worship so as to be *inclusive* of all the children of God and *exclusive* of all that is evil in doctrine or practice. There can be room left for the reception into fellowship of every member of Christ's body and yet all the believers in the locality may not be in communion. All may be owned, though, through their own wills, or conduct, or their not knowing divine principles, all are not actually in fellowship.

This is what is not understood, and you might ask "Why then if you own us are you not with us?" This is a fair question, but your *us* is less than the whole family of the real children of God. A man may own the whole family

to which he belongs and refuse to accompany some in that family when they go contrary to the father's word and will. The fellowship of the family is with the father and those who seek to keep his word and do his will. The love of the family extends, or ought to extend, to all, even the most unworthy members. The persons and their ways are distinguished, and so there is a corresponding difference between love and fellowship, and between you and the system of worship you practice. I do not wish to be separated from you but from your system. The naughty child who is kept from, or put away from, or stays away from the family table is loved; but while he is naughty fellowship is refused. If the boy does not heed the father's word he cannot have the father's fellowship, nor the fellowship of the children who do obey. It is not that the father and the children do not wish to give their fellowship. They do, but the naughty one makes that impossible till he changes his ways, unless they are to make themselves partakers of his naughtiness. Now, here are "the commandments of the Lord"—"Keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you." "This do in remembrance of me." "Covet to prophesy." "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." "For ye may all prophesy one by one that all may learn and that all may be comforted"—1 Cor. xi. 1-25; xii, 7-11; xiv, 31-37, 39. "All these worketh that one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." The apostle found fault with the *practices* of the Corinthians, as they were disorderly, but he did not

say they were acting on wrong *principles* in leaving room for the free action of the Spirit in the assembly. The very disorder and the way it was met prove that their meetings were of a different character than ordinary congregational meetings. As you have shown in speaking of "the evil results of this theory," Brethren often fail just as those did at Corinth. One would not justify the failure, but it does prove, though in a sorrowful way, that Brethren at least are seeking to act according to Scripture. They keep the ordinances; remember the Lord in the breaking of bread; own the one body in the way they gather, and yield to the leading of the Spirit in the assembly. But where in the denominations are these "commandments of the Lord" obeyed? Nowhere that I know of or have heard about. Then the believers in the denominations are like naughty children who are either ignorant of or knowingly neglecting the Father's will and word. You, brother, and those who go on like you in mixed, professed public worship after this is pointed out have no room to complain of "exclusiveness and intolerance." Is this not the naughty child blaming others instead of himself and his own disobedience to plain, imperative directions? There are those who seek simply to carry out these and all other words of the Lord, and there is room for and a welcome given to every believer endeavouring to do the same. They may and do fail miserably, but it is in trying to do the right thing. Are you to alter your ways or are they to alter God's Word? "Two cannot walk together except they are agreed."

While you practically make a dead letter of such plain Scriptures as—1 Cor. xii. and xiv., and possibly forget the homily on love in Chapter xiii., you keep those away from you, in worship at least, who sincerely want to know their Lord's will and do it. They cannot come where you are with good consciences, but you and every member of Christ's body are welcome with them, and will find room for conscientiously carrying out the whole Word of God, and that Word says much about Christ, the Church, worship and discipline, seldom if ever heard among denominations.

The person you name as one that would not be received is no exception to what I have just stated. He or any other believer would be welcomed so soon as they cleared themselves of evil associations, so that the receiving of them would be to the glory of God—Rom. xv. 7. But as he is part of a unity, to receive him; without his separating himself from it, would be to own that unity, and go into fellowship where evil was shown up and never fully repudiated. If "every other branch of the Church" welcomes him, and so called "exclusive Brethren" do not, it shows who are seeking to care for the holiness that becomes God's House. One need not deny that he is a man of God, or that he has done a great work, but when it is a question of holiness, we must not hold the faith of God with respect of persons. He and those with him might not hold the evil doctrine taught by Mr. Newton, but they never proved themselves clear in this matter—2 Cor. vii. 11. If a child is in complicity with those who have

insulted the parent this should be settled before he enjoys the fellowship of the parent and the family. So, complicity in the insult to the Lord Jesus, That He was such a Saviour as would need a Saviour for Himself, should be settled before there is fellowship at His table. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." We have the Word to teach "when it is unclean and when it is clean," and it is written of the leprous house, "he that eateth in the house shall wash his clothes"—Lev. xiv. 47. That is, as I have put it, the child has to own his fault, the Christian has to repudiate his former associations, and then the honour of the parent, or the holiness of the Lord, or the separateness of His people, are not compromised. But one feels that this principle of separation from evil is not and cannot be understood till the Lord reveals it through real exercise of conscience and the ploughing up of the soul by the Spirit applying the Word in connection with what is due to God and the holiness which becomes His House. This will not lead such to think themselves better than others, though it will make them vigilant in their endeavour to exclude evil in doctrine, practice, or association. This is quite another thing from the exclusion of Christians.

You speak of "Christian bodies" and form and own a Presbyterian body. I object to it and every other such body for two reasons. It is too narrow or exclusive, even if it is Pan-Presbyterianism, as there are other real Christians which it does not include. It is too broad or inclusive as there are Presbyterians *knowingly* owned who are not real

Christians. Brethren form nothing, but they seek to own the one body formed by the Holy Spirit—1 Cor. xii. 12-13. As there is only one Holy Spirit, all believers in whom He dwells can only be one body. "There is one body and one Spirit." This one body is a divine reality which includes all the real and excludes all the mere professing Christians. But, as I have shown, the seeing and answering to it must be by the power of the Holy Ghost. Anything less than the Spirit leading to the owning of it in "the obedience of faith" results in Brethrenism, and not in the endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"—Rom. xvi. 25-26; Eph. iv. 1-4. You may have even a union of Christians, yet this is a different thing from the owning of the union formed and maintained by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The smallest congregation of Presbyterians, in meeting as such, own the whole of that body of Presbyterians everywhere. Two or three believers, gathered to the name of the Lord, owning Him as the Head and themselves as members of His body, are owning the whole body of Christ and not any part or section of it. Presbyterians are allowed to say for themselves what they are doing, and their statement is accepted. May not those who own the "one body"—Eph. iv. 1-4—also say so, and their word be believed? If so, and who would gainsay it, then they neither make nor own a sect, but meet on the principles which recognise the whole body of Christ. Admit this and you must drop the charge of sectarianism so frequently and so emphatically

repeated. To be consistent also, you must separate from the system you are in, as it is owned, and indeed owns itself, to be a *sect*.

But it is evident that your ideas and those of Scripture on separation from evil are diametrically opposed. You say "we are to 'keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph. iv. 3), not by separation, but 'forbearing one another in love.'" And that "come out from among them and be ye separate," means "out of heathenism and idolatry; but it is a wicked perversion of Scripture to say it teaches that God's people are to come out and be separate from their churches." Further you positively plead for *toleration of evil* on the plea "that the Church was not free from evil in New Testament times." Scripture nowhere sanctions or pleads for toleration of evil as you seem to do. Take heed, dear brother, that what has just been quoted is not on your part, "a wicked perversion of Scripture." One cannot believe that you have done it wilfully, but you have done it ignorantly. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable"—James iii. 17. Your reasoning and use of Scripture, if it proves anything, proves that it is first peace, then purity. "Our God is a consuming fire." You may as soon succeed in mixing fire and frost as in keeping the "unity of the Spirit" along with toleration of evil. The Spirit is the *Holy* Spirit, and any unity inconsistent with holiness cannot have His sanction. To support your reasoning the words ought to read "forbearing one another *in evil*," instead of "in love." As to "coming out from among them"



meaning heathenism and idolatry, the context says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with *unbelievers*: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"—2 Cor. vi. 14. Surely this is a broad, distinct principle. It comes into everything pertaining to God and requires to be maintained in faithfulness to the Lord more than integrity and honour with the chieftain would lead him to "right such wrong where it is given, even if it were in the court of heaven." But "unbelievers" are specially mentioned as those from whom we have to be separate, and there are unbelievers who are not connected with heathenism and idolatry. Indeed unbelievers are to be found among the managers, the musicians, the members, the Sunday School teachers, and those who contribute largely to the support of your churches. You like others may say, "judge not that ye be not judged." One has not, and ought not, to judge *motives*, but we have, and ought, to judge the *actions* of those who are yoked together with us in the things of God. "Do not ye judge them that are within?" "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person"—1 Cor. v. 12-13. This person was a *believer* who was guilty of sin and who was put away for it, but he was restored again on repentance—2 Cor. ii. 6-9. The ideas of *knowingly* going on in communion with unconverted people, or with believers who have fallen into sin and have not repented, are unknown in Scripture, though winked at in so many congregations to-day. This

was pointed out in certain cases to an earnest minister known to me. He could only say, "I know it is so, but what can you do?" This is just the point. Your church has not the courage or the *power*, and in many cases, alas, congregations have not the *will* to put away such from among themselves, You cannot purge out the old leaven. What then can be done? You can purge yourself out by coming out and being separate. This is the meaning and application of 2 Cor. vi. 14-18 and 2 Tim. ii. 19-22. In the things of God whatever is not according to the Word and the holiness of the Lord, is *evil* and *iniquity*. We find the word "purge" used in two remarkable connections. In 1 Cor. v. 7, it is applied to moral evil. The assembly is looked upon as responsible and as having the power to purge it out. We find the word "purge" again in 2 Tim. ii. 21, where, from the context, and indeed from the whole Epistle, things are seen to be in confusion, and evil has obtained such sway, that the assembly has no longer the power to purge it out. The faithful man is then called upon to "purge himself from these"—to come out from the evil. He is also urged to "follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Those doing so will not "set up other small sects," but they will find a resource in God and His Word, and as members of the one body they can gather unto the Lord apart from all sectarianism. To do this requires faith and courage in such "perilous times," but the word is plain—as to where there are these things, and the form of godliness, while the power

is denied—from such turn away—2 Timothy iii. 5. Self-interest, the love of ease, the relationships with others, the failure and inconsistency of those who have sought to act upon the truth, must all be set aside if we are to keep the Lord's word and not deny His name—Rev. iii. 8. Scripture is plain, and imperative as plain:—"Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity," and "Hold aloof from every form of evil"—2 Tim. ii. 19; 1 Thess. v. 22.

With all their faults and weakness I have often heard those who seek to keep the unity of the Spirit speak lovingly of, and by their names praying for believers in the denominations. How often have you heard those in the denominations so speak of and pray for those they call "exclusive brethren?" Would the man who did this in sincerity not be suspected, and be made to feel that he was suspected of having a sympathy as little desired as the contagion of small-pox. I know this as one who has been through it, but it is worth going through and enduring for the deepening and the widening of the love it brings for "all saints." It draws out the heart in sympathy with the heart of the Lord to every member of His body, and there may be some of them among the corruptions of Romanism. We need not be surprised, however, if, like the apostle, we find that the more abundantly we love, the less we are loved, and that making an uncompromising stand for truth and holiness will expose us, as it exposed Paul, to opposition and misrepresentation.

## ASSEMBLY DISCIPLINE.

Assembly discipline has to do with rule or the inflicting of punishment in putting anyone away from, or denying him the privileges and fellowship of, the congregation or assembly. Next to setting aside the leading of the Holy Spirit, or the practical denial of His presence in the assembly, one might say that denominations fail most in the exercise of discipline. This failure appears in two ways. They knowingly, in many instances, allow unconverted persons in communion; tolerate evils in doctrine or conduct; overlook the instructions of the Word of God as to spiritual ministry, and fall in with the ways of the world, doing as the world does to keep any concern going. On the other hand, when they do exercise discipline, it is, for the most part, done by the *officials*: not by the *congregation* as such. Scripture connects discipline with being gathered together and makes it the action of the many—the assembly as such—1 Cor. v. 4-13; 2 Cor. ii. 6-8. The assembly and each individual are responsible to clear themselves, failing to do this, the assembly may forfeit its place as an assembly of God—2 Cor. vii. 11; Rev. ii. 5, 21-23. But if it puts away evil, its place as an assembly is maintained, and the action will be owned by all other assemblies gathered in a scriptural

way, and their actions, with the Lord in the midst, will also be owned so as to recognize that there is one body, one Spirit, and one Lord.

“The things which happened unto Israel are types for us, and have been written for our admonition”—1 Cor. x. 6-11. It will be admitted that leprosy is a type of sin, and that the “law of the leper” supplies principles which are of the utmost importance in detecting and judging evil—Lev. xiii., xiv. Few will fail to see and own that leprosy in a person, in a garment, and in a house, represent sin in an individual, in his associations, and in what takes the ground of an assembly of God. We are thus supplied with a very complete set of principles for discerning “what is unclean, and what is clean.”

There may be a case of leprosy where a Christian has sinned, and though it is neither known publicly to the world, nor to the assembly, the Lord may cause it to be brought before some among His servants. This might happen in various ways. The sin may have been confessed to the Lord, and judged in His presence, by the person, yet his conscience requires to be further relieved by confessing it to some who are watching for souls. If the self-judgment has been deep and thorough, there will be little thought about the consequences. When the person has taken sides with the Lord against himself, the bitterness of death is passed. In such a case, the spiritual find the Lord has been at work before them, and they can recognize and own what the Lord has done, and confirm it in love and prayer, so that there

the matter may end. It is the case of leprosy "turned into white; then the priest shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague—he is clean"—Lev. xii. 17.

This might even be the result where the evil has come to the knowledge of the spiritual, though the person who has sinned may not have been humbled about it till faithfully dealt with concerning his sin. In such dealing or examination, the assembly, as such, takes no part. As in Israel, it is not congregational, but priestly, work, or the action of the spiritual which may result in the evil being seen, confessed, and judged in the presence of the Lord, and the person being restored; so that the matter need not come at all before the assembly. "Brethren, if even a man be taken in some fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted"—Gal. vi. 1.

Should the priestly action fail to gain or restore the person, or the evil be publicly known and clearly proved, then the matter must come before the assembly, that it may clear itself, and act according to what is due to the honour of the name of the Lord. When the evil has so come out in the presence of the Lord and His gathered saints, unless it is judged and put away, His honour, His holiness, and the claim of the assembly to be God's assembly are compromised. The words of the Lord to Israel, through Moses, ought, then, to fall on the ears like the blast of a trumpet,—“Command the children of Israel

that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead. Both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them, that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell"—Num. v. 2-4.

There may be cases where evil doctrine or practice, or evil in some such subtle form as spiritual pride, self-importance, or self-will, has long been working in a believer, and though the spiritual may have discerned it, and delicately pointed it out, there has not been anything on which to act more definitely, so that by the spiritual and the believer himself it remains unjudged.

A person's ear or nose may be frost-bitten, as apparent to his neighbour, and he himself neither feel nor know the fact. Sin like leprosy may be working in a believer, and the lack of feeling or knowledge be one of the worst features of the case. Samson "wist not that the Lord had departed from him." The high pretensions and unreality of the Laodicean state is specially marked by "thou knowest not." The deep-seated nature of the malady, the proof of the blinding influences of the enemy, may become apparent by the matter being pointed out, and not seen or owned by the believer, who may still ask, "What have I done?" Even after some outrage on the Lord, His assembly, His truth, or His servants, the offender may stand upon his integrity and request that a prophet should come with the word to show him his sin. Such a blinded, benumbed condition is neither reached nor left behind in a day.

Such a state may cause no trouble in a denomination: it, however, cannot escape being detected by the Lord, nor if there is faithfulness and power among His gathered saints, will it fail to be manifested to the assembly. The occasion will arrive for the evil to be shown up and judged. This is not likely to be in a time of poverty, weakness, slothfulness, or sleep, so much as in the midst of blessing, and the return of spiritual power. It was on the occasion of feasting and joy in connection with the birth of Isaac that Ishmael's mockery led to the casting out of the bondwoman and her son. The same is true in principle when the Lord visits an assembly with real blessing. The returning health and vigour of the body makes manifest and throws off what in languor and weakness was hidden and suffered to remain.

In as unexpected and apparently inappropriate a manner as Ishmael's mockery, the evil may be manifested in the very midst of the feasting, that its real character and source may not be mistaken or misjudged. Unfaithfulness and blunted spiritual sensibilities require that the shock should be both sudden and severe. How should, or could, it be otherwise, when it is the challenge of the Lord? His heart, set on further blessing and full restoration, permits the evil to be manifested; leaving conscience to call attention to the "uncleanness" and the "strange gods," He startles the saints, like Jacob of old, by the summons, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there"—Gen. xxiv.

Apart from the scriptural course of unjudged evil



being told to the assembly, when either a brother or brethren have failed to gain an erring brother, the Lord may permit something in connection with it to come out, in His own presence and in the presence of the assembly, through the brother himself, or even by the enemy, into whose snare he has fallen, urging him on; the Lord so overruling that both may be discomfitted. It is then a striking instance of leprosy in a house. When treating of leprosy in a person, or in a garment—sin in an individual, or one's surroundings—Scripture says nothing of the Lord having put it there. In the case of leprosy in a house, these are the words of the Lord, "I put the plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession"—Lev. xiv. 34. The Lord cannot be charged with doing evil, yet He says, "I put." As with the house, so with the assembly now—the Lord is not the author of the evil, yet He may be over it being manifested in the assembly, and in that sense put it there. Man or Satan may be the real author of the evil, but when it is so exposed in the assembly, the Lord *puts it there* for humiliation and judgment. "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets. The Lord God hath spoken, and who can but prophesy?"—Am. iii. 6-8. When the Lord thus calls attention to the presence of evil in the assembly, the spiritual, like the priests in Israel, to be faithful and act according to the word, must patiently examine that

which has been manifested. After waiting, and further examination, as in the case of shutting up the house for seven days, the plague may spread in the walls of the house, or the evil be clearly proved as still working in the person, as evidenced by his not having been led to self-judgment and confession. The priestly work of the spiritual having failed to restore the brother, others than the priest, or those who have hitherto dealt with the case, are then called into action. The matter must come before the assembly for judgment. This is where discipline by a session, or meeting of elders, fails to conform to Scripture. The assembly alone can put a believer away or receive one into communion. Discipline must be the act of the many, of the assembly as such—1 Cor. v. 4-5; 2 Cor. ii. 6. The evil having been determined, the assembly is put on its responsibility to clear itself, by "taking away the stones in which the plague is," by expelling those from its midst in whom the evil is found. Further investigation, priestly work, patient waiting, or discussion have no place then and there, when once the evil has been proved, unless something transpires which overthrows the main points already determined. These being unchallenged, and *proofs, or scriptural testimony concerning proofs, having been given to carry the consciences of the saints*, the assembly must act for the Lord by judging the evil. If it fails to clear itself, and the evil spreads like a "fretting leprosy" in a house, then what answers to the breaking down of the house must take place. The assembly which refuses to judge and put away *known and*

*proved evil*, ceases to have a claim to be an assembly of God. "It is unclean," and the only course left to the faithful man in it is to "purge himself" from the vessels to dishonour, for "every work of their hands, and that which they offer there, is unclean"—Hag. ii. 13-14; 2 Tim. ii. 21.

One who has hitherto had no part in the sin shown up within, and left unjudged by, the assembly, becomes a partaker of its sin by having fellowship with such an assembly. "He that goeth into the house," that "lieth in the house," or "eateth in the house," "shall be unclean"—Lev. xiv. 46-47; xv. If any one from such an assembly is received by another assembly, the latter makes itself partaker of the defilement of the former, and it is rendered unclean. The person received was a part of the whole from which he came. In receiving him the whole assembly has been received, or there is not such a thing as unity or oneness. The whole of the assembly receiving him has, therefore, become defiled. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"—1 Cor. vii. 6; Gal. v. 9. The only way of preventing this is by the person washing his clothes, that is to say, by owning that he has been in an unclean place, and has thereby become defiled: he thus clears himself of his associations. Then an assembly that is clear can receive him without participating in the defilement of the one from which he came. But if a Christian does not clear himself of his former associations, he defiles those who receive him into fellowship. He is like one unclean by a dead body, that which he touches "shall be unclean"—Hag. ii. 13.

The principles of the holiness which becomes God's house are eternal principles—Ps. xciii. 5. Distance of time, or distance of place, from the occasion and the meeting where the plague was put in the house, or when the evil was shown up in an assembly, cannot make it anything else than evil. The extent to which it has spread, or the great mass through which the leaven has become diffused, does not render it anything other than *leaven*. Though the trace of it may be so slight that, as some assert, "it has worn itself out," this is not how the Lord speaks of and acts in regard to evil. Manifest blessing in the gospel, or the devotedness of those who are linked by fellowship with such as left the evil unjudged, or did not clear themselves at the beginning, do not prove that the evil association is removed. Look at this in the history of Josiah—2 Kings xxiii., xxiii. He removed the high places and the corruptions and abominations which had been set up by Solomon. They had not been perfectly cleared away by such kings as Jehosophat and Hezekiah. The origin of the evil was at least three hundred and fifty years before. Great men, much blessing and devotedness had come between. But when God's holiness was recognized and acted upon, the evil was judged at its source, as shown by the burning of men's bones upon the altar. Whether the origin of the evil be fifty, or three hundred and fifty, years, separation from it is demanded by the principles of the holiness of the Lord. Till an individual separates himself from the mass, he is defiled and defiling in all his associations. This is soon discerned when

they are brought into the fierce light which beats around the throne of the holiness of the Lord. Many received into the meeting may be quite ignorant of the fact that there was once a plague in the house, from which it was never purged or pronounced clean. That the meeting in which they find themselves is not the one in which the plague appeared does not clear them while there are those there who were in the defiled meeting, or who have had fellowship with those who were in it. To think otherwise, is to ignore entirely that there is one body, though the members of it may meet in different places. The oneness formed by the Spirit must in such cases either not be seen, or ignored. The meeting must then be on purely independent ground, and be a practical denial of the oneness of the body of Christ. This lands such meetings at once among the divisions so rebuked at Corinth, and raises the question, "Is Christ divided?"—1 Cor. i. 10-13. It is impossible for such meetings to show that they act according to the word. They either stand for a divided Christ, by being alone and independent, or they are linked with others and the past, and are, therefore, still in fellowship with evil. It is admitted that there was evil doctrine in a certain meeting in Plymouth. It might also be granted that it is not tolerated in the acknowledged meeting there, or in other meetings linked with that meeting by fellowship, now. The Lord put the plague in the house. He publicly exposed the evil in the assembly. There were the clearest proofs that the doctrine undermined the holiness of the Person of Christ. This has been

shown in a previous chapter. Those in the meeting did not clear themselves. The faithful among them, to keep good consciences, came out and separated from the evil. Those who remained were defiled. "Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord." "His uncleanness is yet upon him"—Num. xix. 13-15. Those in the meeting were like the open vessel and all that was in the defiled tent—they were rendered unclean. All who have had fellowship with them have become unclean. They are linked with the evil till they purify themselves by cutting the connection and coming out in separation from evil. Till this is done, they have not proved themselves clear—2 Cor. vii. 11. The distance of three hundred and fifty years, not to speak of less than fifty years, did not wear out the evil in Israel. The presence of eminent servants like Jehosaphat and Hezekiah, the revival and great blessing in connection with what answers to the feast of the Passover, do not remove the necessity for judging the evil at its source when there is more thorough restoration, as in the case of Josiah. So, such believers as have unwittingly come into fellowship with what formerly became defiled, are nevertheless responsible to clear themselves when they know of their evil associations. To such, however, the words might be applied, "Of some, have compassion, making a difference; and others, save with fear, snatching them out of the fire, hating every trace of evil." But when once they do know, and have their consciences exercised regarding their as-

sociations, and then refuse to separate from the evil, they render their consciences bad by knowingly participating in the defilement of those who refused to clear themselves at the beginning. Then all such meetings are like the house with the plague of "fretting leprosy." It was *broken down*. The meetings cease to have any claim to be assemblies of God. Every faithful man who would keep a good conscience must clear himself of them by departing from iniquity and holding aloof from every form of evil,—be it moral evil, doctrinal evil, or ecclesiastical evil—2 Tim. ii. 19-22 ; 2 Thess. v. 22. In so doing he is not, strictly speaking, separating from Christians, but separating from evil. Neither are those who are separate excluding Christians, but they do seek to be exclusive of evil. If the desire to shut out evil doctrine and evil practices render us *exclusive*, we can thank God for still causing some to care for what is so becoming to the holiness due to His name. We can thus be *inclusive* of all with which the Lord can go on, and *exclusive* of all which gives place to Satan.

Though the evil may have been of the worst kind, if there is faithfulness in judging it, and the assembly clears itself by purging out the leaven, it remains God's assembly. Of those there it can be said, "In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter ;" and such as are faithful in other places, having confidence in the Lord and the saints, without question, or entering into details, will bow, and own the judgment, as an action sanctioned by the Lord in the midst of those gathered, as owning that there

is one body—1 Cor. v.; xii. 25-27 ; 2 Cor. vii. 4, 11-16. The Lord having led to action there, He has settled the matter everywhere. The judgment applies wherever His presence is owned in the midst of those gathered unto His name as members of the one body. To think or act otherwise would be to deny the oneness of the body, or to admit that the Lord could act like an erring judge, who might contradict himself by deciding the same case in different places in opposite ways. If there is such a thing as the Lord leading to action in discipline in the midst of His own, and it is once granted that He has so led, then the matter is settled everywhere for all who are subject to the Lord—John xx. 23 ; 2 Cor. vi. 10.

For other assemblies to rejudge the case, till there are the clearest proofs of evil, would be to deny that they continue to own the fellowship of one body. Such fellowship implies that one received in any assembly is virtually also received in every assembly, and one put away anywhere is put away everywhere. Then the action of any assembly, unless there are unquestionable proofs of it having been an unrighteous action, is accepted by every other assembly as its own action. But even with strong proofs of evil, to rejudge the case apart from the accused assembly, would be virtually to inflict the punishment before bringing the case into court. If that assembly is not heard it is already cut off. Then if in addition to not being permitted to answer for itself, the case is taken up without anyone coming from the accused assembly, and the proofs of evil are not clear, the action in refusing communion would be characterised



by both independency and unrighteousness. To maintain such a course would prove that the evil was on the part of the assembly judging, and those assemblies going with the action. The refusal to confess and disown such an action, repeatedly pointed out with entreaty, would show that there was "fretting" leprosy there, and the claim to be recognized as an assembly of God would be forfeited.

This setting aside of an assembly, answering to the breaking down of the leprous house, may happen in two ways. On the one hand, the assembly refusing to put away known and proved evil, in practice or fundamental doctrine, may have its candlestick removed—Rev. ii. 5. On the other hand, the assembly which acts in discipline when the proofs of evil are not clear, or when it makes views of doctrine, not touching the Person or work of Christ, or undermining foundation truths, the basis of assembly fellowship or discipline, such an action must be self-destructive to all assemblies by which it is endorsed. There may be Christians there and much energy in gospel or other work, yet the claim and standing of true assemblies of God may be lost. Thus, views of church government, or views of doctrines such as baptism, the sufferings of Christ during His life, the believer's standing, or the nature of the life of all saints, if made the basis of fellowship, or discipline, or division, at once bring in sectarianism and prove that the simple conditions of life in Christ and godliness of walk, as giving a title to fellowship on the ground of the Church of God, have been abandoned. On hearing of such a state of things every

believer is responsible to "make search and ask diligently," and as the will and the power to deal with evil and put it away is lost in such assemblies, his only resource is to separate himself from them—Deu. xiii. 12-15; 2 Tim. ii. 19.

The cases in Scripture where persons were smitten with leprosy, as a mark of God's detecting and judging evil, are solemn, instructive, and have a warning voice in this connection. It is, indeed, a humbling lesson to find that "Miriam the prophetess," who led the response to the song of triumph after passing through the sea, should, on another occasion, be asked by the Lord, "Wherefore, then, were ye not afraid to speak against My servant Moses"—Num. xii. Though what Moses had done was wrong, the Lord would not allow His servant to be spoken against without marking it in displeasure,—"Behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow." The Lord is very jealous of jealousy. Many a one has found that he has had to suffer the shame of the open exposure of his speaking against a weak instrument whom the Lord may be using, even though there might be a difference of judgment as to the views he had written or the way he was carrying on work. The Lord still makes good the principle of His words, "Touch not Mine anointed; do My prophets no harm."

The world, as by stealth, may have been for a long time making inroads into the heart of a Christian, unknown to himself or his brethren. Attendance at meetings, and even prominence in service, may hide for a time the loss of freshness and spiritual power.

But the leprosy is at work, and if not detected and judged it will sooner or later make itself manifest. The Lord in His very faithfulness will cause such an one to be troubled—Ps. cxix. 75. Thus, how often has the covered covetousness of a Christian resulted in lying and deceitful practices, and, as with Gehazi, been openly manifested by his being detected, and becoming “a leper as white as snow”—2 Kings v. 20-27.

Once more, Uzziah, who was not a priest, though warned against presuming to minister, presumptuously “went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense”—2 Kings xxvi. 16. “While he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up to his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord.” Even in such a solemn manner the Lord in mercy may detect and expose the pride working in the heart of one of His own, by allowing “his heart to be lifted up to his destruction.”

“Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? and to princes, Ye are ungodly? How much less to Him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor?” “He will not lay upon man more than is right.” “He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others: because they turned back from Him, and would not consider any of His ways”—Job. xxxiv. 18-27. It is remarkable that the *jealousy*, the *covetousness*, and the *presumption* detected and judged in the three cases of leprosy should find their counterparts among the evils of the last days. “They have gone in the

way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward; and perished in the gainsaying of Core"—Jude 11. It is a fact for the conscience that the being smitten with leprosy is not spoken wholly of such as were not children of God. Miriam and Uzziah had been eminent in service.

The principles of the holiness of the Lord, known among His people of old, and yet to be known when the King will govern His house and the land, when He takes the kingdom, are the principles the Lord now maintains in the assembly. They are thus indicated in Psalm ci.—“A froward heart shall depart from me; I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will I not suffer.” “He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land, that I may cut off all the wicked doers from the city of the Lord.” Thus the Lord now maintains among those around Him what is due to the holiness which becomes His house, and however painful or testing may be the exercise of discipline, He may put the plague in the house that it may be judged. If it is not then judged, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. I have confidence in you, through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he may be”—Gal. v. 9-10. “If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened

of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world"—1 Cor. xi. 31-32.

As put by another, "Discipline has in view a double service; one, to check the spread of the evil which has sprung up; the other, to determine it in the one in whom it had broken out, either by the priestly action, as I might say (that is, the spiritual), or by the congregational action which is excision. As we see in Israel, they were justly afraid of the leper, lest the malady should spread; and therefore the distempered person was subjected to the care and supervision of the priest, to the end he might, in mercy, be restored, and declared as no longer contaminable: so, now, it is the duty of the spiritual to restore those overtaken in a fault. It was the business and duty of the congregation to regard the leper as excluded when the priest regarded him as irreparable; and then the first service would at least be secured—the evil checked from spreading. The danger of infection must be cut off. If the leprosy should be so inveterate as to subject the leper to absolute excision from the whole congregation of Israel, in the sternest way, how much more would one guilty of some presumptuous sin of wilfulness persisted in be subject to open and public excommunication, as expressed by the words, 'The whole congregation shall stone him with stones.'

"It is evident, therefore, that while all are responsible for discipline rightly and truly carried out, all are not called into action until the evil cannot be stayed or determined without excision. But while restoration can be hoped for, it is the business of

the spiritual, as we have seen (for though all Israel was concerned and interested in the state of the leper, no one was fit to deal with him or to restore him but the priests; and when they declared the case incurable, then the leper was finally shut out as unclean; and when one was convicted of a high-handed and public wilfulness, the whole congregation in a very distinct manner cut him off)."

The assembly having rightly and truly acted in discipline, the action is owned by the Lord: for, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven"—Matt. xviii. 18; and "whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained"—John xx. 23. Then, for anyone inside to treat the one put away as if nothing had happened, or otherwise by intercourse to break down or weaken the action of the assembly, *until he bows to its judgment and confesses his sin*, is a very serious matter; but to take sides with him in the face of the judgment of the assembly is to put oneself in his place, and justify the assembly in also putting away such an offender as would thus choose to follow his own will. Discipline is often hindered by the honey of natural affection; it can be helped by the salt of grace, which rebukes corruption. However difficult it may be, when it is a question of holiness and what is due to the Lord, the faithful man will "know no man after the flesh." He must be like Levi, "who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children"—Deut. xxxiii. 9; Ex. xxxii. 26-29. When Nadab and

Abihu, by fire from the Lord, died before the Lord, "Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar, and unto Ithamar his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes, lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people"—Lev. x. 1-6. The same is still true in principle in the assembly. In the matter of Korah, "Israel murmured against Moses, and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord"—Num. xvi. How did it appear to the Lord? "Wrath went out from the Lord, and fourteen thousand and seven hundred died by the plague." Thus has the Lord shown us in principle what a grievous and solemn matter it is for His own to have any other mind or will than His in regard to what He may do in maintaining by discipline what is due to the holiness which becomes His House for ever. Faithfulness to the Lord, sincere love for, and faithfulness towards, the one who has been put away, will cause those who have taken sides with the Lord to keep the offender at a distance. This may explain what to many seems unchristian. But to act otherwise would be unchristian. This ought not to hinder the utmost care for, and prayer about, him, to the end that he may be really broken down before the Lord, restored in his soul, and also in due time restored to the assembly. Important as it is for an assembly to clear itself when evil appears in its midst, its very existence as an assembly depending upon that, the real end of discipline towards a brother who has sinned is not attained unless he is restored. What the character of the sin may have

been is not so much the question, as what are the riches of the grace and the boundlessness of the mercy of the Lord. The one put away at Corinth for such "a sin as is not so much as named among the Gentiles" was so broken down and overwhelmed with sorrow that they are urged to forgive him, to comfort him, and confirm their love toward him. This meant receiving him back to the assembly—1 Cor. v.; 2 Cor. ii.; John xx. 23. When one can be so received back, distance, reserve, or the keeping up the remembrance of his sin, may be as culpable on the part of those within as the failure of others to take sides with the Lord when the person was put away. How often is the Spirit grieved by an assembly, or some of its number, failing to forgive "even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven!"

An assembly may miss the mind of the Lord, or the guidance of the Spirit, and, through weakness, or the acting of the flesh, wrongly put one away from its midst. The brother so put away, being honest with himself in the presence of the Lord, may find another and a real cause for the Lord having allowed him to be dealt with in discipline. Patient waiting on the Lord, through His mercy and faithfulness, may lead to the real restoration of both the brother and the assembly. "Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will He teach sinners in the way. The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies"—Ps. xxv. 8-10.



## CHURCH SYSTEMS.

“Even in speaking of the treatment of the tares, *i.e.* of errors, corruptions, and even sins—the Lord said, ‘Let both’ (that is good and evil) ‘grow together until the harvest.’ Surely when the differences between Christian men are mainly upon some small matters of church polity, a maxim like this may well apply, and all may be content to engage simply in strengthening the life of their own principles, without invidious endeavours to misrepresent the principles and so to check the progress of others. ‘Let all grow together’—Calvanist and Armenian, Methodist and Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Episcopalian—until the Great Day come, and meanwhile let our one struggle be a generous rivalry in the conversion and education of human souls.”—“*Church Systems in the Nineteenth Century*,” page 674, by J. G. Rogers, B.A.

Hitherto my remarks have been directly in answer to the *Catechism* quoted. The book from which the foregoing quotation is made, and a lecture in it, on “Plymouth Brethren,” have nevertheless been kept in view and may now be noticed more definitely. The book like the *Catechism* has sought me, rather than having been sought by me, as ideas and passages from it have been printed in New Zealand and used against myself. It has therefore been thrust in my way, and so what may be written by me is rather the reply than the attack. The contrast of the statements of the quotation with

what has been advanced in our chapters is very decided. We see here also, as well as in the *Catechism*, that toleration of evil, rather than separation from evil, is strongly advocated. The Scripture quoted in support is, as usual, misapplied. It is from the parable of the tares and the wheat. Unfortunately for our author the Lord gives the interpretation and says "The field is the world." To make the world mean the same thing as the Church, or even the churches, unless they are more corrupt than we have allowed, is an egregious blunder. It would also make Scripture contradict itself. The passages previously noticed, from the Epistles, uniformly insist on purging out, putting away, or coming out from evil, instead of letting good and evil grow together in the Church.

As our author discusses Church Systems, devoting one of thirteen lectures to *Plymouth Brethren*, placing them among the sects, we may glance briefly at the systems or churches of men. The *Catechism* is on the same lines, as it speaks of Brethren as "this sect" and also of "other Christian bodies" and any "other evangelical body." We may see further on that Brethren do not gather as a sect, and that if the nature of a sect, and what Brethren do, are understood, it cannot be proved that they act on sectarian principles. While they deny that they do meet as a sect, these writers and the denominations generally avow sectarianism and own themselves to be "other Christian bodies." We may take them at their word, and the churches of men are proved. But we see that Scripture speaks of "one body," of

the Church as Christ's body, and where there was the germ, in thought at least, of many bodies, the staggering question is asked "Is Christ divided?"—1 Cor. i. 13. At the beginning, the members on earth, and the Head in heaven, were spoken of as *one*; taken together they are called Christ—1 Cor. xii. 12. We now find many *other bodies*; they cannot, however, be properly called "Christian bodies;" their number and formation alike forbid the description. They may contain believers, and they may claim to be churches, but as God has only one Church, they must be the systems or the churches of men. Scripture speaks of "one body," "the body of Christ": it does not own "other Christian bodies," nor sanction membership of anything else than the body of Christ.

One might be reminded that Scripture speaks of "the churches of Asia," "the churches of Galatia," "the seven churches," and "all the churches." When a district, a province, a country, or all the countries Paul travelled in, are spoken of, we do hear of churches or assemblies. But nowhere can we find "other Christian bodies," and certainly there is no such thought as these existing together in the same town or city. Different meeting places there may and must have been at the like of Jerusalem, where almost at once believers numbered from eight to ten thousand. The work went on and long after the whole of the Christians at Jerusalem are spoken of as the Church—Acts xv. 4. Paul also writes to "the Church of God which is at Corinth," and to "the Church of the Thessalonians." There were

not two bodies, nor ever two representations of Christ's body in one city. All the Christians in the place are spoken of as the body of Christ and members in particular—1 Cor. xii. 27. Paul could address a letter to them without any possible confusion. Who would now claim a letter addressed to the Church of God at Melbourne? The numerous rival claimants would each disprove the other's right, and the postal authorities could only settle matters justly by sending the epistle to the dead-letter office. Such is the confusion brought in by the churches of men.

But let us look at some of these claimants, keeping before us what we have seen from Scripture concerning the Church of God, the body of Christ. As we are occupied with Brethren and the reader is likely to wonder what may be said about their claim we can begin with them. But look again at the address of the letter—"To the Church of God at Melbourne." There are several meetings of Brethren in the city, but they would not even put in a claim as they make no profession of being the Church of God. This may be thought rather strange as Brethren are credited with assuming to act more scripturally than any denomination. That is so, and it is a very good reason for their not claiming the letter. They own that they endeavour to act upon the principles, and seek to maintain, the ground of the Church of God, but for that very reason they would not claim to be the Church itself. Brethren are a mere handful compared with the real believers in the various denominations in Melbourne. They do not even claim to be better than their fellow Christians though they

do endeavour to worship more according to Scripture, in owning that there is one body and one Spirit. They do not form or set up anything, but they simply seek to fall back on the word of God and own the all sufficiency of the Lord and the power of the Spirit to gather them amid the ruin on the ground of the Church of God, and according to the principles which would embrace all the children of God, and leave room for everything to be carried out according to the 'Word of God. Weakness, failure and divisions there are, but we are looking at principles rather than practices, and asking if Christians have divine principles or human principles before them as the ideal to which they seek to conform. Brethren do claim to have the former as their standard, though they would not assume to be more than a remnant of the real Church of God, and so they would not even claim a letter so addressed to Melbourne.

It is often said that extremes meet, so one may turn from Brethren to the Church of Rome. There can be no mistake that the letter would be claimed by the Roman bishop. If bold pretension means proof, then the Roman Catholics have a right to the letter to the Church of God in Melbourne. The claim is so absolute that they do not admit that any one outside their communion can be saved. But the name "Church of Rome" and the address "Church of God" do not correspond. This will be admitted, but they maintain they are the true Church and give us three marks in proof. These are *catholicity, unity and sanctity*. The first means that

it is the whole or the universal church. The Greek Church is older than it, and rejects the claim of Rome. The catholicity of Rome is disproved when the populations of Greece, Russia, and a part of Turkey, together numbering about a hundred million souls, are all within the pale of the Greek Church. Besides, there are all the Protestant denominations. *Roman Catholic* may be true, but *catholic* is not true of the Church of Rome. So the first mark cannot be found. Then as to the second, that of unity, Rome itself is divided about the idolatry of the Virgin and the infallibility of the Pope. If we come to the third mark, that of sanctity, the histories of the popes and the deeds of violence, written in blood, make us turn away as from a foul murder, rather than cause us to bow with reverence in the presence of a holy sacrifice. Not to raise the questions as to whether there are new natures and the indwelling of the Spirit, on its own showing, the Church of Rome is clearly not the Church of God.

Next the episcopal bishop might claim the letter to the Church of God at Melbourne. Here again there is inconsistency at the outset as this system is called the Church of England. It is also formed on the principle that the priesthood or the clergy have the entire control of the church. The functionaries are divided into the three grades—bishops, priests, and deacons. When we turn to Scripture we cannot find authority for such a system. “Lord bishop” is a flat contradiction of “Be ye not called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren,” and “neither as being lords over God’s

heritage." Then we find that Scripture knows nothing of the bishop of a diocese. It does speak, however, of several bishops in one congregation or assembly, as in addressing the saints at Philippi "with the bishops and deacons"—Phil. i. 1. There were not several assemblies, but always only one assembly, in any city. Moreover bishops and elders or overseers are always the same in Scripture. Paul "sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church," and in addressing them he speaks of "the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers"—Acts xx. 17, 28. Peter, addressing elders, speaks of himself also as an elder—1 Pet. v. 1. About the end of the second century history shows that there was a superior president of groups of churches. We look in vain for such a person in Scripture. If we turn from the officers to the flock we find that episcopacy makes every baptised person, in a given parish, a member of the church. Being born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit are not even the professed qualifications for membership, unless it is pressed that these take place in baptism. But this goes deeply into what is very far from scriptural in the system of the Church of England. Her constitution proceeds, not upon the recognition of faith and life in the members, but upon the efficacy of ordinances, and hence "every parishioner" is required to attend the Lord's Supper so many times a year. The population of the parish is fictitiously made the Church of God, and the whole system, if tested by Scripture, is more the world than the church. That there are earnest preachers

and devoted Christians in the system, no one will deny. The examination of its constitution, and the principles which underlie the system, however, will show that it has no claim, at home or abroad, to be considered the Church of God.

After the Episcopalian, one naturally turns to the Presbyterian Church. Here, however, there is less pretension. The utmost that is claimed is that it is a *branch* of the true Church. It is modelled on the Jewish Synagogue and professes to find warrant for its principles of government in the Acts of the Apostles, pointing to James as the first moderator, and to the decision concerning the Gentiles as an early act by a general assembly—Acts xv. Though modest enough in not claiming to be the Church of God, like every other system, it professes to be nearest to the scriptural order. It is not noticed, however, that there are fatal barriers both in Scripture and history against this claim. Take the case cited—Acts xv.—and it appears that Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem, unto the *Apostles* and *elders*, about this question,” and it seems that the journey was undertaken on account of having received a revelation—Gal. ii. 2. To make a Presbyterian general assembly a parallel case to this, it is needful to find Apostles and produce a revelation. There is no pretension to the possession of either of these, so the application of, and authority from, Acts xv., break down. This council could preface its decision by the significant words, “It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.” One never heard of a Presbyterian general assembly venturing to put such



a stamp upon its decisions. The *Blue-book* has no such importance. History is likewise against the claim that the Apostles sanctioned Presbyterianism. The earliest authentic documents prove that the Episcopal system prevailed after the Apostles, and that Rome itself, at the beginning, as now, is only the climax reached by the natural forces at work in High Church Episcopacy. The branches and fruits of the Roman tree have no affinity with a Presbyterian root. No new soil, climate, or circumstances, would produce such a freak of nature. Presbyterianism and Romanism are antagonistic rather than homogeneous. It has been noticed already that elders are identical with overseers and bishops. Presbyterians are therefore scriptural in adhering to the two classes of officers—elders and deacons. When it is a question of their appointment however, it is not so easy to give Scripture for the Presbyterian practice of popular choice. Acts vi. shows that this was done with deacons. There is no Scripture to prove that elders were ever appointed except by Apostles or their delegates. These and not the churches ordained elders in every city—Tit. i. 5; Acts xiv. 23. To reverse matters now, by the churches appointing elders, is the assumption of authority without any scriptural warrant. The Presbytery ordains the minister, and he in turn ordains the elders whom the congregation chooses, and so the authority falls back on the principle of there being a special class by whom everything is controlled. This class, the clergy, alone can sanction charges, dispense sacraments and attend to the administration of the

church's affairs. As the clergy really create themselves and they are necessary to form a church court, the whole fabric of the church, and the principle on which it is held together, depend on the work of their own hands. It is like what in argument is called begging the question. You are cleverly asked at the outset to admit the point to be proved and then from this it is assumed that proof has been given. But there were churches in apostolic times before there were elders, as well as churches which, from all we can gather, had no elders. In Scripture therefore the assemblies or churches were gathered together on another principle than that of being sanctioned by the Presbytery. The gifts likewise were not dependent on the people's choice and the Presbytery's license and ordination. They were given by the Lord and belonged not to single congregations, but to the whole body of Christ, and they wrought as responsible, not to the congregation or the Presbytery, but to the Lord alone. When we consider these things and the fact that there are so many different Presbyterian bodies that it has been found necessary to have Pan-Presbyterian Councils, where over forty different churches with many or few scores or hundreds of congregations in each, were represented, we see how far this is from the Church of God with many members in one body. Some of the most devoted Christians I have ever known are among Presbyterians. Out of perhaps a thousand of their ministers with whom I have been intimately acquainted I could not recall a score who left any doubt on one's mind as to their being con-

verted men, real children of God. Many of them likewise have proved that they were real gifts. My lot, however, was amongst the most evangelical, where there were frequently hundreds of souls converted. But when it was a question of the Lord, the Spirit, the Word, and the Church of God, being duly acknowledged, I could not find it in Presbyterianism.

Congregationalists or Independents may next claim our attention. Their principles, as indicated by the names, proceed on the assertion that each congregation or assembly settles its own affairs, entirely free from the control or interference of other assemblies or any higher church court. Each congregation judges for itself independently of any other. The members of the church appoint ministers and deacons, and each congregation is a kind of self-governing republic, supposed to consist only of those who acknowledge Christ as their Saviour and Lord. Life in Christ is their ground of gathering, but few would be bold enough to assert that Congregationalists, as now found, are any more free from a mixture of unbelievers than some other denominations. Here however we notice principles and observe that Mr. Rogers says:—

“The church ideas of the Brethren have been mainly borrowed from other communities, though most of them have been spoilt in the borrowing. . . . They have taken from Congregationalism that idea of a ‘gathered church,’ which is the root of their system.”—p. 531.

One has seldom met in an otherwise able, candid, and well-informed writer, such an utter failure “to

apprehend the principles and actions of opponents" as is manifested by these sentences and the entire lecture on Brethren by Mr. Rogers. There could not be a greater contrast than that of the "church ideas" of Independents and Brethren. In the former, independent, separate self-governing societies is the idea: in the latter, one body, one Spirit, and one Lord, are the controlling ideas. Take Melbourne, and the various Congregationalist churches in the one city are quite independent of each other. Scripture and Brethren (those particularly in question) own that the Church in a city consists of all the real believers in the place, and further that they are only a part of a greater divine unity, composed of all the believers on the earth in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. Wherever this one body is owned by two or three gathering unto the Lord, with the Spirit left free to lead and guide, the action to which He leads in the assembly is, on these principles, owned by all other assemblies so gathered. It might just as well be asserted therefore that *disintegration* and *unity* are the same, as to have it said that the "church ideas" of Independents and Brethren are analogous. Not only in Jerusalem when many thousands were gathered, though they may have had different places of meeting, was the Church regarded as one; but rightly rendered we read, "Then had the Church rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria" — Acts ix. 31. As we have seen, this divine oneness is what Brethren seek to own. They therefore consider that of all systems, Independency is the furthest removed from their thoughts, or the teaching of

Scripture as to the Church of God. In these circumstances, for the lecturer to find affinity, where contrast is so conspicuous, betrays his self-complacent admiration of his own system, and also proves that he is quite out of touch with the ideas of Brethren.

Baptists are Independents in their polity, though they make adult baptism by immersion their distinguishing feature. By it they are separated from other Christians, and on this ground they are themselves gathered as a church. This is clearly the basis of profession rather than of reality: the acknowledgement of a human, rather than a divine, ground of gathering. A person cannot baptise himself: another must do it for him. To make this act or ordinance the centre and ground of gathering is to own a human unity formed by water: Scripture presents a divine unity formed by the Spirit. Brethren endeavour to own the latter. The fact that there are those among them who have different judgments on baptism, instead of being the reproach thought by many, proves that they are gathered on a deeper and more divine ground than any ordinance. Baptists, or even those among Brethren, on the other hand, who make the view of an ordinance administered by men the ground of gathering, or a test of fellowship, or a reason for more or less sympathy, are not free from the very spirit of sectarianism. They exalt the outward, individual acknowledgment of the Lord, above the inward, corporate and spiritual expression of union with the Head and members of His body. There must therefore be proportionate failure in the endeavour to keep the unity of the

Spirit, and a tendency towards sectarianism, whenever baptism is made a test of fellowship in the assembly or in service.

Methodists of late, in a way, take the ground of being a church, but at their origin, and still as their rules declare, they were and are only a society of penitent sinners "fleeing from the wrath to come." The evangelistic, the missionary spirit, and the cultivation of fellowship among the adherents, have always characterised Methodism. But the tenacious way in which they cling to the doctrine of "falling away" makes it impossible for Methodists to apprehend the real meaning of the Church of God. As we have seen this Church is what Christ builds and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. What is true of the whole is true of every part. Hence what Christ builds is eternal: every stone, every believer, has divine security. If there is "falling away" therefore, it is not what Christ has built. The great body of Methodists are ready to contend to the last for their theory. Thus the real idea of the Church of God, consisting of those born again, made partakers of the divine nature, secured by the seal of the Holy Spirit and thereby united to Christ and one another in the unalterable, eternal relationship against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, cannot be understood, much less can it be expressed by the Methodists in church fellowship. Some of them do admit the divine security of the believer, but among all of them the clergy have a place and possibly no other denomination has manifested such a thoroughly sectarian spirit, though it is also ques-

tionable if any other denomination has brought more souls to Christ. The lives they live, and the results accomplished by Methodists, go far beyond their creed and their ideas of the Church, though the best results they accomplish fall far short of Scripture and the Spirit's thoughts regarding the Church of God.

There are numerous lesser denominations distinguished by, or gathered round, bits of truth, in doctrine or polity. In all the systems of men, however, one fails to find the salient features of the divine system of the Church of God as found in Scripture, or as sought to be exhibited in practice in the times of the Apostles. To put these briefly, as Brethren see them, and amid weakness and failure seek to give them expression, one would say, that Christ is Lord and His will must be absolute: He has expressed His will in His word which ought to be explicitly obeyed: the holiness of the Lord renders separation from evil the necessary *principle* of gathering: the "mystery" that there is one body and one Spirit forms the *basis* of gathering: the energy of grace is the *power* of unity and gathering: the *centre* of gathering is the Lord Himself: and the *bond* of unity is the Holy Ghost. These things being kept in view the gathering will in some measure express the leading features of the Church of God in contrast to those of the systems of men. As has been well said, the same laws which regulate a planet, mould a tear. So, however they fail, this is the ideal of Brethren, that the *principles* which characterize the Church of God,

as seen in Scripture, should govern the two or three, who, apart from the systems of men, seek to prove and own the all sufficiency of the *Name* of the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge the one divine system of God.

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### MR. ROGERS AND THE CHURCH IDEA.

Two things strike one very forcibly in looking through *Church Systems*, by Mr. Rogers. The first is, that in his thirteen lectures, giving a kind of complete review of the *Systems* of this century, *Plymouth Brethren* should have a place, and be discussed so as to occupy a thirteenth part of the bulky volume. Secondly, it is astonishing to be compelled to observe how very little acquaintance the lecturer shows with this part of his subject. One can scarcely believe that an author with a reputation, any more than a general with honours fresh upon him, should leave himself open to attack and defeat by any trio who has the single advantage of knowing the battle-field. The sequel will make this manifest.

As to Brethren being so noticed, it is a new danger for them, and it is also a confession that they have a place and exert a power which theological colleges and professors can no longer afford to ignore. It is not now mere skirmishing amongst a few at an outpost. The citadel must be in some danger of being



undermined, or even captured, when there is such an expedition sent against this foe of clericalism and church organisation. Formerly a student might get through his theological course without hearing from the professorial chair even a few remarks, or more than a dignified sneer, about "Plymouth Brethren." Times are now more serious with venerable customs and institutions. Professors are compelled to notice Brethren, and our author admits that others might learn from them when he suggests:—

"If the churches are successfully to resist the encroachments of Plymouthism in its best form, they must display more of that spirit of intense earnestness and freedom from conventionalism to which the Brethren owe so much of their success."

As already indicated, the way Brethren are treated when they are noticed by the lecturer, and by their reviewers, is much to be deplored. He appears to be as much in touch with his subject as a locksmith with a watch. There is plenty of strength and confidence, but the handling of the delicate parts is not a pleasant thing to those most concerned. But there is a recompense. There has usually been a recompense even in persecution. It is a milder illustration of the same principle. The sight of a martyr at the stake did much for the spread of the gospel in the darker ages. The attacks upon Brethren and the truths which they profess, have led many to enquire and in the end, like Paul, many have preached the faith which they once sought to overthrow. One reason for "their success" which did not occur to the lec-

turer, as it does not usually present itself to Brethren's reviewers, is the unfair, the ill-advised, ignorant, and bitter criticism to which Brethren are subjected. Thousands of instances could be collected where the misrepresentations and shameless attacks from the pulpit and the press have been the direct means of sending Christians among Brethren. One may quietly rest assured that the *Catechism* and the *Lecture* here noticed will produce similar results. Inquiry is stimulated. The inherent desire for fair play produces a revulsion of feeling. The truth gets a fair hearing, and devoted hearts are led to go with the truth and the Lord, at all costs. Here are some of the lecturer's representations:—

“What was meant to be an informal fellowship of men of all churches, became an aggressive and often violent crusade against every church, and, indeed, against the radical idea of the church.

“The ‘assembly,’ as Mr. Darby chooses to designate his Society, is the body of Christ, and its purity is guarded by the presence and presidency of the Holy Ghost in its midst.”

“It does not require much penetration to see that their claim is precisely the same as that advanced by the Church of Rome. The assembly is neither more nor less than the Holy Catholic Church under a different name.”

“Mr. Darby, Mr. Mackintosh, and Mr. Kelly . . . . undertake to assert that they have discovered a Divine order which has been lost to the Church for centuries, and that those only who will conform to it are of the body of Christ.”

“A strange development of the beauty of holiness is this arrogant assumption of the right to sit in judgment upon all professors and their practices, and to declare that all

who do not bear the endorsement of the little company are not of the Christian family."

"They invite us to believe that for nearly eighteen centuries the world was left without a Church. They ask us to ignore all the noble deeds of sacrifice, of suffering, of heroism, which were done in the name of Christ and for the glory of the Master."—pp. 494, 498, 519, 520, 534.

"We (Congregationalists and Brethren) are divided by a radical difference in the mode of looking at Christian truth—a difference as to the spiritual ideal and as to the mode in which it is to be pursued; a difference as to the standard of right and as to the mode of its application; a difference as to the exact position of Scripture and as to the mode of its interpretation; a difference as to the nature of the universal Church and as to the purpose it has to fulfil in the world."—p. 515.

So many questions are raised by the quotations given, one feels bewildered, not for the want of answers, but by the multitude of answers required. Not to lose our way, or weary the reader, it will be best to keep to main issues, and remember that instruction is our aim rather than controversy or the foiling of an opponent. The contrasts between the lecturer's thoughts as a Congregationalist, and those of Brethren, is just and striking, though how he could, in these circumstances, maintain that the latter have borrowed "the root of their system" from the former is hard to understand. We can see from his statements, however, how he so fails to understand and represent Brethren. Unless all we have had before us in our earlier chapters as to the Church is quite unscriptural, the lecturer's grand mistake throughout is that he has not, and never has

had, scriptural ideas of the Church of God, or of the mission of the Holy Spirit, in his mind. He fails egregiously in three ways. 1. He does not see what the Church of God really is in its origin and destiny, nor can he, through not having a right standard, discern the evil of sectarianism. 2. He does not see, indeed he denies, that the Church in man's hand has failed, that Christendom is in ruins, going on to judgment. 3. He does not see that the only resource for the faithful is to renounce all human systems and fall back on God and the word of His grace. These points require separate chapters.

In regard to the Church, what we saw in the *Catechism*,—the confusion between *the Kingdom* and *the Church*, the mixing of the Law, the Church, and Millennial dispensations, — is also here apparent. No distinction is perceived between “the gospel of the grace of God,” or “the glory of Christ,” as preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, in the present Church period, and “the gospel of the kingdom,” to be preached in connection with the future period of the Millennium. No difference is discerned between the relationship of believers now as united to Christ, to form part of His Bride, and believers who will be subjects in the kingdom, when Christ and the heavenly saints reign over the earth in the Millennial age. It is clear that “the radical idea of the Church,” either as it is represented in Scripture, or as it is taught by Mr. Darby, has not been apprehended by the lecturer. It is only conspicuous by its absence. What is understood by the play without Hamlet, could

scarcely find a more apt or striking illustration than "*The Church Systems of the Nineteenth Century*" without the Church of God. One looks in vain throughout the bulky volume for any scriptural presentation of the subject. We have had a parallel case where a well known lecturer in New Zealand has frequently dilated on "Utopias" and left out Jesus Christ and the Utopia which, according to Scripture, He will yet establish when "the kingdom of the world of our Lord and His Christ is come, and He shall reign to the ages of ages." The infidelity of this lecturer might account for the omission; but our author is a Christian of an earnest type, and yet he actually has left out the Church of God. This is the more remarkable when he undertakes to deal with the man who, of all men for centuries, has made this subject his great theme. But as the lecturer has indeed substituted a caricature for the true portrait, Mr. Darby himself must be consulted as to what he held and taught regarding the Church of God. Mr. Darby says:—

"I will explain myself as to what I mean by the Church. The Church is a body subsisting in unity here below, formed by the power of God by the gathering together of His children in union with Christ who is its Head; a body which derives its existence and its unity from the work and the presence of the Holy Spirit come down from heaven, consequent on the ascension of Jesus the Son of God, and of His sitting at the right hand of the Father after having accomplished redemption.

"This Church, united by the Spirit, as the body to the Head, to this Jesus seated at the Father's right hand, will,

no doubt, be manifested in its totality, when Christ shall be manifested in His glory; but, meanwhile, as being formed by the presence of the Holy Ghost *come down from heaven*, it is essentially looked at, in the word of God, as subsisting in its unity on the earth. It is the habitation of God by the Spirit, essentially heavenly in its relationships, but having an earthly pilgrimage, as to the scene in which it is actually found and in which it ought to manifest the nature of the glory of Christ, as His epistle of commendation to the world, for it represents Him and is in His place. It is the bride of the Lamb, in its privileges and calling. It is presented as a chaste virgin to Christ for the day of the marriage of the Lamb."—Vol. iv. pp. 48, 49.

There is more truth, according to Scripture, in this single quotation, on the idea of the Church, than can be found in the 676 pages of the volume by Mr. Rogers. The reason may not be far to seek. He was solely occupied with the churches of men: Mr. Darby, though writing on the same subject, took care to present, and to put other systems in the light of, the Church of God. When he does so, it is not a "violent crusade against . . . the radical idea of the Church;" nor a claim that Mr. Darby's Society is the body of Christ. When he shows that the Church is made to depend on "the Holy Ghost come down from heaven," and "the ascension of Jesus as the Son of God," the Spirit must be withdrawn, and the Lord have left the throne, if "for nearly eighteen centuries the world was left without a Church." Mr. Darby and Brethren are the last who would "invite us to believe that," as the lecturer affirms. But how an author could under-

take to write about Brethren and the one whom they so recognized as a teacher, and mention and not only miss, but grossly misrepresent, what he calls "the root of their system," their idea of the Church, is amazing. But we need to know what Christianity, the Church of God, and the earthly kingdom of Christ, really are, as revealed in the word, in order to judge whether or not the lecturer has spoken according to facts and Scripture. One has heard of a builder, rather defective in his eyesight, going on building a wall, trying the plumb-rule and apparently going by it perfectly. Clearer eyes perceived that the plumb-line, instead of being in the centre niche, was in one of the side niches at the top of the rule. Hence though he was going by the standard, he was a deceived builder; it was a hanging wall. Such may be found to be a fair illustration of the lecturer's thoughts when they are tested by the infallible standard of the word of God.

As far as one has apprehended the teaching of Scripture on the subject, it will be found in outline in the preceding chapters on "The Church of God," and "The Body of Christ." The thoughts there expressed are also in harmony with Mr. Darby's teaching, but they are very different from the representations of the lecturer. For instance, it is admitted that not only may members of Christ's body be found in evangelical denominations, but it is shown that they may be found in even the Church of Rome. This very expression I have also heard from Mr. Darby's lips. Such a statement does not sound like the claim of the Church of Rome. But here is an

explicit denial that "Mr. Darby chooses to designate his society, the body of Christ," and, "that those only who will conform to it are of the body of Christ," or "of the Christian family." In vol. xx. p. 448, Mr. Darby says:—

"Allow me to say that the assemblies of so called 'Plymouth Brethren,' far from calling themselves the 'assembly' or 'Church of God' in a particular place, have always formed and opposed the title. . . .  
 . . . . They believe that they alone are assembled upon the true principle of the Church of God, which I in no wise doubt; but they believe that the Church is in ruins, and that the pretension to be the Church of God in a place would be a false pretension. I add that, if all the Christians in a place were to be found gathered together, which would form (according to order) the assembly of the place, I would not give it that title, because the universal Church is not gathered; and I do not believe in independent churches. I believe that there were formerly local churches representing in a certain sense the whole in their localities; but we are very far from that now. All who have taken the trouble to inquire know, or might have known, that from the first the brethren in question have taken their stand upon the principle of Matt. xviii. as a resource given of God in the general ruin. The pretension to be the assembly of God has always been rejected by the brethren we speak of. Every assembly gathered by the will of God around the Person of Jesus or in His name is *an* assembly of God, if it be only a question of the force of the words; but when it is a question of being the assembly of God in a locality, it is not so in the true sense of the word; and could not be so, considering the state of the universal Church."



Such statements surely can never have come under the eye of the lecturer, yet hundreds of such quotations could be given in which Mr. Darby as distinctly says the opposite of that with which our author gives him credit. So far from it being taught that the Church or the body of Christ was specially confined to those with Mr. Darby, or subject to the will or control of any man or set of men, the teaching in question shows that the Church is a divine unity. But the representation given, of Mr. Darby, and his idea of the Church, is much the same as if, in writing on Presbyterianism, the author had said that Dr. Chalmers taught that only those who conformed to his idea of the Free Church of Scotland belonged to the true invisible Church of God. What confidence would be placed in the statements of one who, professing to be abreast of his age in his line, should so misrepresent the large-hearted Disruption leader and the church in which his name is so embalmed? This, however, as is now apparent, is what is said of Mr. Darby and his teaching on the Church of God.

The reader can now judge for himself, but when the lecturer is so far from what is fair and just on this main issue, little requires to be said in answer to strictures on minor points. But just to show how far he is out on matters of fact we may notice the remark, that Brethren "ask us to ignore all the noble deeds of sacrifice, of suffering, of heroism which were done in the name and for the glory of the Master." Is the author aware that a work of several volumes has been written and published by Brethren, giving church history from the time of the Apostles till

now? Passages could easily be quoted in refutation of his remarks from this and other writers, even those he names, among Brethren. They have also issued, *Persecution and Profession*, a short sketch of the first five centuries: "Light Amid the Darkness," as seen in the life of Luther: "Lights and Shadows of the Reformation," Wicliff, Jerome, Calvin. Lives of Wesley, Whitfield, and Sketches of Evangelists in this and other centuries. The lecturer is behind in his information, and his "eye is jaundiced, and its vision misleading." He would scarcely believe, nor could he make it harmonize with his judgment, that the following passage on the Disruption in Scotland was written by one long after he was a teacher and a writer among Brethren. The lecturer's own tribute to the worthies in the movement in 1843 is cold in comparison with this from *The Bible Witness and Review*:—

"We own the grace and blessing of God on the movement which led to the Disruption,—though not as sanctioning their position—and I will never forget those times of blessing when souls drank in with earnestness the living water, and rejoiced in Christ Jesus; and when a divine enthusiasm pervaded the willing and devoted people, as it did the ministers, to have Christ exalted high above all the powers of earth, as God had given Him this place in glory at His own right hand. 'God was in the midst of her.' The river of God seemed to flow there; the Scriptures were to them the utterances of the living God, affording divine warrant, foundation, and authority for their action. The Spirit of God converted and established souls by means of the Gospel of Christ, preached by men of God, whose life was spent in unfolding the evangelical truths of revelation.

for the glory of Christ and the salvation and edification of their hearers. Their one aim was to exalt God's Christ, and God owned them in their purpose and deed, though not very intelligent—and gave 'showers of blessing' and divine establishing. 'There were giants in those days,' no doubt, in the best sense of the word,—men like Chalmers, Cunningham, and Candlish, whose teaching inspired men with spiritual chivalry, and gave solid energy and glowing fervour, with which to go forth from their side, strong in the certainty of having the saving truth of God in an inspired and authoritative Divine Book, 'every writing' of which was 'God-breathed;' and to give forth the word in the fullest faith, that, under the Spirit's hand, it would be made 'mighty to the pulling down of strongholds,' and the upbuilding of the 'saints in their most holy faith.' "

The disparaging and unjust way in which the lecturer speaks of the leaders among Brethren, and Mr. Darby particularly, and the complete failure in representing, and even in apprehending, the truths and principles held by Brethren, are very surprising. When the facts about both come to light, the critic himself is most to be pitied. Like an unskilful stockman, his efforts tell most upon himself, as he has to pay dearly for handling the whip. Here are more instances where frequently instead of giving a sharp cut, or making a long mark on the backs of the cattle, or frightening them by a loud crack in the air, the lash cuts the stockman's own horse, or is even wound round his own ears.

"All may be content to engage simply in strengthening the life of their own principles, without invidious endeavours to misrepresent the principles and so check the progress of others."

“For those who are attempting in any degree to repair the evil, to free the Church of God from a bondage which the Brethren themselves are the first to reprobate, or to introduce into the regulation of worldly affairs the principles of that kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, they have only censures, misrepresentations and calumnies.”

“They make their protest against sects and sectarianism by creating a new sect, the most narrow, bitter, intolerant, and sectarian of any.”

“Numbers of pure and honest souls have been unable to believe that professions so specious concealed designs so destructive of Christian usefulness and harmony, or that those who talked so fairly of charity and unsectarianism were themselves representatives of a sectarianism more narrow in its theory, more severe in its judgments, more uncharitable in temper, and more unscrupulous in modes of action, than that of any other sect in Christendom. ‘The words of their mouths are smoother than butter, but war is in their heart; their words are softer than oil, yet are they drawn swords.’”

In all conscience, Brethren will require several chances, in attacking ministers and churches, to rival the charity of these quotations. Intelligent Brethren will let the author bear the palm.

One can scarcely conceive, if the features given are rightly traced, how so many intellectual, scholarly men, so many ministers, evangelists, and devoted Christian workers, and members of denominations, should be so blinded and deceived as to fall in with such a system as is described by the lecturer. Surely, if these things are so, Brethren must be under, not divine, but satanic influence.

## THE IDEA OF A SECT.

“In a sense we are all sectaries, and in truth the more catholic the spirit that we cherish, the more ready shall we be to admit that our church is not co-extensive with the one true Church of Christ, and can at best only aspire to be a branch of His great family. There is nothing so miserably sectarian as the boast of any company, small or great, that theirs is the Church, and that all who dissent from them are sects. It is this exclusiveness, involving as it does an essential claim to infallibility, and placing their sect on a level with the Romish Church, that gives distinctive character to the Plymouth Brethren, and justifies other Christians in regarding them with distrust, and meeting their proselyting efforts with a determined resistance.”—*Church Systems*, p. 525.

To our author then Brethren are a sect. They teach “that for nearly eighteen centuries the world was left without a Church,” that Mr. Darby’s Society “is the body of Christ,” that “all who do not bear the endorsement of the little company are not of the Christian family,” “that the assembly is neither more nor less than the Holy Catholic Church under a different name,” and “that the claim which the Brethren set up means the assertion of infallibility.” We have seen enough to know that these are the touches of one “who prefers to substitute a caricature for the true portrait.” One would not however, looking at the author’s other writings, feel free to

say that his own conclusion follows, that "he must be a narrow bigot." But we have seen that Mr. Rogers is like a surveyor without a chain, or else the one he has is a false chain. He has not even a proper standard in his mind. Scriptural thoughts as to the Church of God are as necessary for the measuring and mapping out of the *Church Systems* of this or any century since Pentecost, as a chain and a standard of measurement are for the surveying of any newly acquired territory. But our author is a standard, or a law unto himself, both when he measures the Church of God, and those who endeavour to own its principles. Beginning, as he does, with a false chain, and in a maze of mist, it is not a matter of surprise to find that he ends, rather inconsistently with himself, by giving a contradictory account of Brethren. It is clear that he neither understands the Church of God, nor does he understand Brethren, by whom, in some measure, the Church is understood.

We may see now, as distinctly, that our author has not a just notion of the nature of a sect, and that he misses the mark when he writes so strongly of Brethren as such, with "a distinct sectarian organization." We may bear in mind that the *Catechism* takes the same view.

That Brethren are a sect is disproved in three ways. It is denied by law; by the facts regarding the nature of a sect; and by the owning of, and gathering upon, the principles of the body of Christ. As to the first, little requires to be said in proof. This is the simple fact: Brethren do not, and can

not, as a body, own any property. To do so, the law requires a prescribed creed and system of doctrine or polity. Brethren have nothing of the kind, and, unlike sects or denominations, they could not get and hold, as a religious body, the title deeds of any property. Individuals among Brethren may own halls, and rent them to those who meet in them, but the fact that Brethren have no legal standing as a society or a religious corporation, precludes them from holding property and demonstrates that in the eye of the law they are not a sect.

As Mr. Darby was assailed, as to the Church, and he was allowed to answer for himself, the same is true here, so he may be permitted to explain the nature of a sect:—

“The word sect is employed in the English translation to express the Greek word ‘*hairesis*.’

It is used (except in the Acts of the Apostles, where it is found six times) only once in the Epistle to the Corinthians, once in the Epistle to the Galatians (v. 20), and once in that of Peter (2 Peter ii.) In the First Epistle to the Corinthians it is translated by the word *heresy* (1 Cor. xi. 19).

It signifies a doctrine, or a system, whether of philosophy or religion, which has its adherents united as adopting this doctrine. Its meaning is a little modified now, because the professing church (at least the greater part of it) has taken the name of Catholic, that is to say, universal. Then every religious body, every Christian gathering, which does not belong to this community (so-called Catholic), is by it called a sect; from this the word has become a word of censure. All the Christian bodies are sometimes called sects, in the sense of divisions, when they separate themselves from the whole complement of Christians, or from those who bear

this name. However, the word sect implies in itself always more or less of censure, from the idea that those who compose it are re-united by a doctrine or a particular denomination. We cannot say that this way of looking at it is entirely false; the application may be false, but not the idea itself.

But what is important is to discover that which, in fact, is an assembly of Christians justly deserving this name; or, since it is applied to assemblies or Christian corporations, it is necessary to understand the true principle on which we ought to assemble: that which is not based on this principle is really a sect.

Although the Catholics (so-called) have made a bad use of this truth, it is not less true that the unity of the church is a truth of the greatest importance for Christians, whether the unity of all individually manifested in the world (John xvii.), or that of the body of Christ, formed by the Holy Ghost, come down here (Acts ii.; 1 Cor. xii. 13); so in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel the Lord asks the Father, with regard to those who shall believe through the word of the apostles 'that they all may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou has sent Me' (John xvii. 21). We see there the practical unity of Christians in the communion of the Father and the Son. The apostles should be *one* in thought, word, and deed, by the operation of one Spirit, as the Father and the Son in the unity of the divine nature (ver. 11); then those who should believe by their word ought to be *one* in the communion of the Father and the Son (ver. 21). We shall be perfect in the unity of the glory (ver. 22); but we ought to be *one* now, in order that the world may believe (ver. 21).

Further, the Holy Ghost came down from heaven on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii.), baptized all believers of that time into one body, united to Christ as a body to the Head, and manifested here below on the earth in this unity (1 Cor. xii. 13). We see clearly that it is on the earth, where



it says, in the twelfth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, 'If one member suffer, all the members suffer; and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.' We do not suffer in heaven. But then it is added, 'Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.'

The whole chapter shows the same truth; but these verses suffice to demonstrate that it treats of the church on earth. See here, then, the true unity formed by the Holy Ghost; first, the unity of brethren between themselves, and second, the unity of the body.

The spirit of a sect exists when we see disciples unite outside this unity, and when it is around an opinion that those who profess it are gathered, in order that they be united by means of this opinion. This unity is not founded on the principle of the unity of the body, or of the union of brethren. When such persons are united in a corporation, and mutually recognise each other as members of this corporation, then they constitute formally a sect, because the principle of the gathering is not the unity of the body; and the members are united, not as members of the body of Christ (when they are even such), but as members of a particular corporation. All Christians are members of the body of Christ—an eye, a hand, a foot, etc. (1 Cor. xii. 13-25). The idea of being a member of a church is not found in the Word. The Holy Ghost compares the church on the earth to a body of which Christ is the Head (Ephes. i. 22, 23; Co. i. 18); then each Christian is a member of this body, so of Christ. But to be a member of a particular corporation is quite another idea. Now, the supper of the Lord being the expression of this union of the members (as it says, 1 Cor. x. 17), when a corporation of Christians recognise its right to receive its members to it, there is a unity formally opposed to the unity of the body of Christ. It is possible that this may be ignorance, or that these Christians have never apprehended what is the unity of the body, and that it is the will of God that this unity be manifested on the

earth ; but, in fact, they form a sect, a denial of the unity of the body of Christ. Several of those who are members of the body of Christ are not members of this corporation ; and the supper, although the members partake piously of it, is not the expression of the unity of the body of Christ.

But now a difficulty is presented : the children of God are dispersed ; many pious brethren are attached to this opinion, to that corporation, and mixed up for advantage sake, even in religious things, with the world. There are, alas ! many who have no idea of the unity of the body of Christ, or who deny the duty of manifesting this unity on earth. But all that does not annihilate the truth of God. Those who unite themselves, as I have already said, are but a sect in principle. If I recognise all Christians as members of the body of Christ—if I love them and receive them, from an enlarged heart, even to the supper, supposing that they are walking in holiness and truth, calling upon the name of the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Tim. ii. 19-22 ; Rev. iii. 7), then I am not walking in the spirit of a sect, even although I cannot gather together all the children of God, because I walk according to the principle of this unity of the body of Christ, and seek the practical union among the brethren. If I join with other brethren to take the Lord's supper only as member of the body of Christ, not as a member of a church, whichever it may be, but verily in the unity of the body, ready to receive all Christians who are walking in holiness and truth, I am not a member of a sect ; I am member of nothing else but of the body of Christ. But to gather together upon another principle, in whatever manner it may be, to make a religious corporation, is to make a sect. The principle is very simple. The practical difficulties are sometimes great by reason of the state of the church of God ; but Christ is sufficient for all ; and if we are content to be little in the eyes of men, the thing is not difficult."

We see then that, in its nature, a sect is a religious

corporation, bound together by other principles, and including some, and excluding other persons, than those who have divine natures and who, apart from man's will or choice, have been formed into one body, as united to Christ by the Holy Ghost.

• Where all human organisations are refused and this divine unity alone is acknowledged, what ever others may say or think, those thus owning the oneness of Christ's body are not acting upon the principles of a sect. Literally they are only a part of the whole body, but they act, not in the spirit of a party or a sect, and not on any other principles than those which would permit every member of the one body of Christ, walking according to godliness, from being so assembled. Thus Brethren neither claim to be "the true body of Christ," nor do they admit that they are a sect, or that they act on sectarian principles. They consider that the Church of God was at first, according to the Lord's word, as correctly rendered, *one flock*, under one shepherd—John x. 16. All the divisions and the distinguishing marks have been brought in by man. To put the matter so that the most uninstructed may discern, it is as if the one hundred thousand sheep, the flock of one man, on a large sheep run, had been, during his protracted absence, divided by the various shepherds, branded according to their fancies, mixed up with goats from other owners, and then looked upon and claimed as so many different flocks. Then suppose that the original owner of the whole of the sheep, desires that they should be treated as one flock according to his original instructions. It is long since these

instructions were given. The various flocks have often changed hands, or have become mixed, or have gone astray. The present supposed owners have no kind words for, or any good will towards, those now sent to press the original claim and bring as many as possible back to the first condition of their being only one flock. When any sheep are recovered, and the various brands effaced, and only the mark of the original owner acknowledged, there is no small stir among their assumed owners, and not a little bitterness towards the persons who may be simply acting for the rightful master. But who is really in the wrong? Who is dividing the flock? Who is being defrauded? The answers will depend upon whether we look at things as they are by habit and custom, or at things as they were under the righteous claim and title of the original owner. Admit the latter claim, as law and equity would require, then all the arguments as to the utility, or the legitimacy of the numerous flocks are mere special pleading in a wrong cause.

The parabolic veil of this illustration is so thin that the meaning is transparent. The one flock is the one body, embracing all believers. The primary owner is the Lord. The many flocks are the denominations, with so many different brands, where the ministers allow themselves to be settled over congregations and claim a certain number of people as "my church," "my congregation," or "my flock." The original state of things, both in regard to the gifts being connected with the one Lord, and all saints being one body, is what is seen and urged by Brethren, so that instead of their making another flock, another

sect; they seek to urge the recognition of what existed at the beginning. Then, there was "one Lord," "one body, and one Spirit." In dealing with evil, they had not then to come out from it, because there was power to purge the evil out and maintain the whole Church as "a new lump," "unleavened." This was done at Corinth where they put away the wicked person and proved themselves clear.—1 Cor. v., 2 Cor. vii. 11. But Scripture anticipated the time when the Church would not have the power to deal with evil and gave directions, as we noticed previously, for separation from evil. In now coming out from evil, when there is neither the will nor the power to purge it out, the faithful are simply obeying God's word. Such obedience cannot be a sectarian action: much less can it be the setting up of another sect where those coming out are gathering to the Lord and owning that all believers are one body. They may be like a few of the sheep which in various parts are recovered from those who had claimed them, and though they are gathered together in different places, they are occupying the place, and standing in the relationship, which the whole flock at first had to the original owner. The principles which came in and applied to many different flocks are set aside, and there is a return to the principles which obtained at the beginning when there was one flock. This is what Brethren set before them when they act according to their principles and are rightly understood. But that they act on the principles of a sect, or claim to be "the true body of Christ," or make "an essential claim to infallibility," or place themselves

“on a level with the Romish Church,” is gross misrepresentation. They do hold, as Scripture teaches, that two or three gathered to the name of the Lord, have competent authority to act in discipline. This however is a very different thing from claiming infallibility in action. As a matter of fact assemblies have owned that they have erred in their decisions, and owned it, not merely to assemblies, but even to individuals. In such connections there have been frequently meetings for humiliation and confession. Such facts, as have thus been mentioned, prove conclusively how far our two authors have missed the mark in their representations as to Brethren, as a whole, holding sectarian principles, or being “a distinct sectarian organization.”

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## BRETHREN AND SPECIAL TRUTHS.

“What is it then that the Brethren offer to those who unite with them? Is there some hitherto unknown truth which they have discovered in the Bible, and for which they ask the faith of men? Or are there some points neglected in the pressure of controversy between different sects which they have rescued from their undeserved obscurity and restored to their proper place in the theological system? Have they vindicated some rights of Christian people ignored or trampled under foot for centuries? Or have they developed some higher form of Christian work or administration? Above all, have they given the world some truer

and loftier conception of the gospel itself, raised the standard of evangelical requirements, furnished new and striking illustrations of spiritual heroism worthy to be put by the side (we will not speak of deeds of ancient date) of such an exhibition of principle as was given by the four hundred ministers of the Church of Scotland, when they left the church of their fathers and of their own affections as an act of loyal service to truth? He would be a bold man who ventured to answer these questions in the affirmative."—*Church Systems*, p. 516.

It is helpful to see ourselves as others see us. But any one who really knows the facts, and who is not blinded by prejudice, or enveloped in theological and traditional ideas, would say that the boldness which causes surprise lies with the man who asks such questions, rather than with the one who would answer them in the affirmative. Even the opponents of Brethren have admitted almost every point, and particularly, that Brethren have, not "discovered," but *recovered*, "some hitherto unknown truth," and "have given the world some truer and loftier conception of the gospel itself." This may be seen further on; we look first at whether Brethren furnish any "such an exhibition of principle as was given by the four hundred ministers of the Church of Scotland." This has been so described in the quotation previously given that one cannot be said to make light of what was then exhibited. Let it be rightly estimated, and one can easily furnish a more sterling test of principle, and tell of much greater sacrifice for the truth's sake, from among those so disparaged by our author. There has been an exodus of a far more testing

character going on ever since the Scottish Disruption. Quite as many ministers have taken part in it. They have left the churches of their fathers, the fellowship of their friends, and those to whom the Lord had used them for blessing, and given up their livings, and what they held more dear, the spheres where they were used in reaching souls with the truth. This has not been done in a body, after popular agitation, and with the applause of thousands the world over. The noble and the wealthy were not smiling upon them, nor a great multitude of the most devoted of the middle and working classes moving with them, pledged to stand by them in their hour of need. Those who have given up all, that they might keep good consciences, act according to the word, and please the Lord in worshipping in Spirit and in truth, have had to do it after great exercise of conscience, *one by one*, in the face of untold disadvantages. Then it was not one effort, for which they were girded, and through which they were carried, on the crest of a wave of enthusiasm. It was rather the daily cross, made heavier by the opposition, or the alienation of the dearest friends, by the misrepresentations and harsh judgments of earnest Christians, and even of those whom they have begotten by the gospel. No great success, no outward show of results, no personal advantages, sustained them or beckoned them on to more popular spheres. They had the pulpit, the press, and the church partizan, constantly against them. To be misunderstood, rejected, despised, and made the subjects of ridicule, was the lot of those who before



they left the churches were so highly esteemed. Some had to feel and own that they were in a ministerial position for which they were never intended, and though so much time had been spent in preparing for it, they surrendered position and advantages and took to some employment to provide for their wants. Others who had real gift went forth without salary, collections, or promises, or even the encouragement of Brethren, doing the work of the Lord, little known and less applauded, counting upon the Lord alone to meet their wants and the needs of their families. No such strain came upon either ministers or people at the Disruption. That movement was popular. There was little room for the endurance and faith of the individual being tested. It is a different thing with Brethren, one by one, coming out to the Lord. Such an exhibition of faithfulness to principle, and the exercise of faith in God, with death to self at every step, and continual rejection because they act according to their consciences, is little understood or imagined by our author. He shows that he knows nothing of rejection personally, and that he is either ignorant of those of whom he writes, or manifesting the boldness he attributes to others if they dare to speak well of Brethren. Even if wrong, Brethren "must be made of sterner stuff" than he supposes.

The same temerity and disregard of facts are seen when he writes of their leaders as in writing of their principles. Here is a sample :

" Compared with founders of great theological systems

like Calvin, or with successful preachers like Whitefield, or with sagacious organisers like Wesley, or with heroic missionaries like Henry Martin, or John Williams, or Robert Moffat, or with practical Christian philanthropists like Dr. Guthrie, the greatest of them is a mere pigmy."

It has been said that comparisons are odious, and they are never more so, than when untruth is called in to aid in disparagement. The author's comparisons betray either ignorance or prejudice, and perhaps both. With the exception of Calvin, it would be more true to put all the others mentioned below Mr. Darby, and the philanthropist, when measured by faith in God, below George Müller. It is a question if even Calvin, or any other theological writer, has shown more *originality* than Mr. Darby. Even if he were wrong, no one who knows his thirty-seven volumes, of about six hundred pages each, could question his learning, his grasp of mind, or his remarkable originality. Among the thousands of commentaries on the Bible, Mr. Darby's *Synopsis* stands alone in originality, and in presenting the mind of God as it is revealed in His word. The translations of the Scriptures in English, German, and French, by this one man will bear examination by the greatest scholars of the age. The best renderings of the Revised New Testament were given in Mr. Darby's *New Translation* long before the Revision Committee issued theirs. He has also had something to say on nearly all the great questions of a theological character during this century. His one large pamphlet, "*Have we a Revelation from God,*" was posted gratuitously to the ministers of the Free Church, pre-

vious to their decision in the General Assembly on the Robertson Smith case. It is believed that this pamphlet had much to do with preventing the Free Church from acquiescing in infidelity, or suffering a disruption. This is only one of many instances where Mr. Darby has given a decided testimony for truth and righteousness. Rationalism, Romanism, Ritualism, and questions among Dissenters, have been grasped as by a master mind. Indeed, when Mr. Darby was an Irish curate, Newman was often in his company, and has put it in writing, that for the first time in his life, he felt himself in the presence of a superior, and one would suppose that our author would scarcely consider Newman "a mere pigmy." There have been, and are other men, of mark among Brethren, though this is a small matter, except as his remarks might prejudice those who read our author and hinder them from searching the literature for themselves. One speaks from experience in this, and would think of others, in going into detail on a minor point, as a little knowledge of the leaders and the literature of Brethren, came upon me with the emotions of one making an important discovery. By reading and comparing with Scripture, everything was changed; and in spite of the cross and rejection which it brought, and still brings, the opening up of truth, and of God's ways, and the fuller knowledge of the Lord, are to me an ample compensation for all that was sacrificed.

*Truth* and *principles*, however, not leaders or Brethren, are what one would wish to make prominent. The latter are only noticed to prevent invidious

attacks from causing the former to be disregarded.

We go on to notice that Mr. Rogers has not shown that he has scriptural thoughts concerning the characteristic features of Christianity. His system is Judaized Christianity, if it is not Jewish altogether, leaving out the Church of God, and Christianity proper. He says :

“That the duty of His (the Lord’s) servants is to proclaim His kingdom and gather men under His rule.” “To fill the world with the spirit of the gospel as the leaven leavens the barrel of meal into which it is cast.”

As already noticed, the heavenly character of the Church, and the earthly character of the kingdom, are not distinguished. Further, the meal is the symbol of what is good and wholesome ; the leaven, of what is bad and corrupt. If the world is to be filled with the latter, it will be ripe for judgment, rather than brought under the rule of the Lord. This is nearer the true view. As in the case of the Church, our author has a false standard, and he shows that he neither understands Christianity proper, nor those who have been used of God to trace its leading features afresh from Scripture. What God was doing in Israel ; what He is doing now in the Church by the Holy Ghost on earth as a Person ; what He will do when the Lord descends into the air to take away the Church ; what He will do when His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives ; and what He will do during the Millennial period and afterwards, our author knows not. These

distinct, diverse ways of acting on God's part, are things at which the lecturer would smile. He would set them down as moot points, "marked by a decided mysticism." This is how he speaks of the leading of the Spirit in the assembly, and of the secret rapture of the saints, though one would think the latter is plainly taught in 1 Thess. iv. 13-18, on the authority of a direct revelation. But he said there was "a difference as to the standard of right," "as to Scripture itself," and it is evident that plain Scripture is not to him an end of controversy.

Besides an understanding of God's ways, the points mentioned involve nothing less than the distinctive features of Christianity itself. To the lecturer Christianity is simply a matter of *religion* and "the indirect power of the gospel in shaping the thought and life of the world." He has no thought of Christ being rejected, nor does he see the consequences of that rejection, in the Holy Ghost on earth, the Church having a heavenly calling and destiny, and the postponement of the restoration of Israel, and of the earthly reign, till the Lord takes away the Church and then brings in the earthly kingdom by judgment in power. With our author this consummation, though to him evidently a long way off, is to be accomplished by the improvement of the world, and the reformation of what God has shown, and the cross has demonstrated, to be beyond recovery by any process of purification short of the judgments of God. He would have Christians, to whom the world is crucified and they unto the world (Gal. vi. 14), to

“Go boldly into the world’s conflicts, and the world’s work, and seek to enoble the country and to purify the age by leaving in it abundant traces that there have been in its midst men of God.”—p. 531.

How sorrowful that a servant should not only so misunderstand, but positively contradict the Master ! The Lord says, “Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you.”—Luke xii. 14. He was rejected, so then He took the place, and the path of rejection, till He will return in power. Hence those who follow in His steps are, He says, “Not of the world even as I am not of the world.” “If ye were of the world the world would love its own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” “Now is the judgment of this world.—John xvii. 16; xv. 19; xii. 31. After pronouncing the judgment of Babylon did Daniel accept Belshazzar’s gifts and throw himself into the affairs of the State, seeking to improve and help on the kingdom of which he had pronounced the doom? No: if he had, would it not have been a practical proof that he either did not understand or believe his own prediction? Well, God has, on account of the rejection and crucifixion of Christ, foretold that the world, and that Christendom, through not abiding in His goodness, is hastening on to judgment. Clearly, therefore to “go boldly into the world’s work and seek to enoble the country and purify the age,” would be to go in the face of Scripture, and to work against God, hoping in vain to enoble and purify what He is going to judge. The

Lord Himself gave up the earthly place and took the path of rejection, leading to the cross, and He says, "If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."—Matt. xvi. 24. The lecturer's teaching deprives these things of their real meaning. He is so far from understanding them that he actually takes the thoughts and expressions to represent his own mistaken ideas. Referring to his ideal in contrast to what he conceives to be the practice of Brethren, he considers that his is a religion, "which raises its testimony for truth when truth is most unpopular, and when he who would be loyal to its claims must take up his cross." It is strange how we get deceived. Brethren believe, and they are made to feel the cross in a way the lecturer little understands, that what he describes applies to them pre-eminently. From experience of both positions one can assure him that there is no question but what for unpopularity, and cross-bearing, those he so misrepresents bear the palm. His own lecture is good proof. He has no such stinging words, in his entire volume, for any other class of Christians, as those in which he has inveighed against Brethren.

He asks, "Above all, have they given the world some truer and loftier conception of the gospel itself?" This has been conceded long ago. The way ministers, editors, evangelists, and thousands of the most spiritually minded Christians, have read and used the teachings emanating from Brethren is notorious. The book "*Grace and Truth*," so commended by Mr. Moody, and to which he confessed

that he owed a truer and loftier conception of the gospel, is simply Mr. Darby's teaching put through another man's brain and heart. The author never disguised the source of what so frequently thrilled the most intelligent Christians at Conference gatherings. Indeed, he professed to make it his aim to bring the truths identified with Brethren inside his denomination. Many others in a quiet way, have sought to do the same, and evangelical teaching and preaching, have been influenced throughout Christendom. The most popular evangelists, who fraternise with all denominations, are those who preach many of the truths brought out through Brethren, and denounce the Brethren themselves. It is the old story of using the ladder to reach the summit and then kicking away the very means by which they have been elevated. Those abused have been for the most part content to sink themselves and be thankful that the truth was making way even though it brought a heavier cross to those from whom it emanated.

But what are the truths, or aspects of truth, to which Brethren have given prominence? Are there any of importance not to be found in theological writings before the literature of Brethren appeared? Or as put by our author, "are there some points neglected in the pressure of controversy, which have been rescued from their undeserved obscurity and restored to their proper place?" We answer yes, and begin with what applies to the individual, and what is more important, what brings out *the divine side of the gospel*. The following from Mr. Darby will answer explicitly the author's challenge, "Above



all, have they given to the world some truer and loftier conception of the gospel itself?"

"There is in John iii. a twofold aspect of Christ presented to us, as the object of faith, through which we do not perish but have everlasting life. As Son of man, He *must* be lifted up; as only begotten Son of God, He is given by the *infinite love* of God.

Many souls stop at the first, the Son of man's meeting the necessity in which men stood as sinners before God, and do not look on to that infinite love of God which gave His only begotten Son—the love which provided the needed lamb, the true source of all this work of grace, which stamps on it its true character and effect, and without which it could not be.

Hence such souls have not true peace and liberty with God. Practically for them the love is only in Christ, and God remains a just and unbending judge. They do not really know Him, the God of love, our Saviour. Others alas! with more fatal error, false to their own state and God's holiness, with no true or adequate sense of sin, reject all true propitiation. The 'must be lifted up' has no moral force for them, nothing that the conscience with a true sense of sin needs.

The former was one great defect of the Reformation, the other comes of modern infidelity, for such it really is. Alas! that defect of the Reformation, as a system of doctrine, is the habitual state of many sincere souls now. But it is sad. Righteousness may reign for them with hope; but it is not grace reigning through righteousness. I repeat, God is not known in His nature of love, nor indeed the present completeness of redemption.

The statement of John iii. begins with the need of man in view of what God is, as indeed it must; but it gives as the source and result of it for the soul, its measure too in

grace, that which was in the heart of God towards a ruined world. As in Hebrews x., to give us boldness to enter into the holiest, the origin is 'Lo! I come to do Thy will; by the which will we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.' The offering was the means, but He was accomplishing the will of God in grace, and by the exercise of the same grace in which he came to do it; for 'hereby know we love, that He laid down His life for us.' So in Romans v. God commends His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. It is summed up in the full saying: Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This point being premised, and it is an important one, I add that we cannot present too simply the value of Christ's blood, and redemption and forgiveness through it, to the awakened sinner whom that love may have drawn to feel his need; for by need, and because of need, the sinner must come—it is his only just place before God. The love of God, and even His love announced in forgiveness through the work of Christ, may, through the power of the Holy Ghost, awaken the sense of need; still having the forgiveness is another thing. That love, brought home to the soul through grace, produces confidence, not peace; but it does produce confidence. Hence we come into the light. God is light and God is love. Christ in the world was the light of the world, and He was there in divine love. Grace and truth came (*egeneto*) by Jesus Christ. When God reveals *Himself*, He must be both—light and love. The love draws and produces confidence; as with the woman in the city who was a sinner, the prodigal, Peter in the boat. The light shows us our sinfulness. We are before God according to the truth of what He is, and the truth of what we are. But the atonement does more than show this; it meets and is the answer to our case when known. It is the ground, through faith, of forgiveness and peace (see Luke vii. 47-50). Christ could anticipate His work, and the child of wisdom

go in peace. The law may by grace reach the conscience and make us feel our guilt, but it does not reveal God in love. But that love has done what was needed for our sinful state. Hereby know we love, that He laid down His life for us. He was delivered for our offences, died for our sins according to the Scriptures, is the propitiation for our sins, set forth as a mercy seat through faith in His blood which cleanses from all sin. With His stripes we are healed. I might multiply passages; I only now cite these, that the simple basis of the gospel in divine love on the one side, and on the other the work that love has wrought to purge our sins and withal our consciences, so that we may be in peace before a holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity, may be simply and fully before us."

Let these statements be duly weighed, and it will be difficult to produce anything equal to them from the range of theological literature previous to the issue of the writings of Brethren. In the quotation, principles are expressed which Mr. Darby has elsewhere developed and applied. Through what has come mainly from this source thousands are enjoying "a truer and loftier conception of the gospel" than was known by their forefathers. They have little idea, however, to whom they are chiefly indebted.

Through Mr. Darby, those associated with him, and Brethren generally, simple Christians have been taught the value, the authority, the meaning, and the use, of God's word. Bible reading and Bible study have received an impetus throughout Christendom, and even Mr. Moody, largely used in this line, learnt the secret of handling the word of God through Brethren. While seeking to repair the

House of the Lord, Brethren, like those in Josiah's day, underneath a mass of traditional rubbish, *found the book* itself. They read, and trembled at God's word, and the effect is being felt far and wide, though seldom traced to its true source.

They have also shown that for the believer after Pentecost, and during the present period of grace, God had provided some better thing than for Old Testament saints—Heb. xi. 40. A Christian has 'a *purged conscience* which was not possible with believers of old—Heb. ix. 9; x. 2. He is also *sealed* with the Holy Spirit and his body is made a *temple* of the Holy Ghost—Eph. i. 13; iv. 30; 1 Cor. vi. 19. He has a new nature, is of the new creation, and is made the *righteousness of God* in Christ—Rom. iii. 21-22; 2 Cor. v. 17-21. It is his privilege to know that the old man was *crucified with Christ*, and that practical *deliverance* may be enjoyed, so as to realise that he is dead to sin, and alive unto God; that he is in the Spirit, and not in the flesh, and that Christ lives in him, and he in Christ—Rom. v.-viii. He has not only like the saints of old, faith in God, and life from God, but he has also, by the Holy Ghost, *union* with Christ as *the Risen Man* in the glory of God—John xiv. 20; 1 Cor. vi. 17; Eph. iii. 5-6; v. 29-32. He is brought to God, *inside the veil*, seated in *heavenly places*—1 Pet. iii. 18; Eph. ii. 5-14; Heb. x. 19-29. He is *not of the world*, and is not here to help it on, but he has Christ for his affections, and as his object, and he *looks for the coming* of the Lord to change his vile body, and bring him into the glory which is to be given to the Lord Jesus Christ—Phil.

iii 19-21 ; 1 Thess. iv. 13-19. These things have been in the Bible all along, and glimpses of some of them may have been obtained, but until the teaching or literature of Brethren was abroad there was no full and clear unfolding of these blessed truths. Even now, where there is candour, it is allowed that they are nowhere expounded or enforced as they are among Brethren. What is more, and not so readily admitted, is, that it is not practicable to fully apprehend and continue to enjoy these truths apart from the position of separation taken by Brethren. Those who give up separation soon loose the power, if not actually the real knowledge, of some of these truths.

Then, when we look at the truths concerning the Church of God, the body of Christ, at the gifts, or at gathering to the Lord, at the Spirit's presence and action in the assembly, at the real meaning of worship in Spirit and in truth, at all the principles the foregoing chapters illustrate and enforce, they distinguish Brethren from all other Christians. Yet our author asks, "Have they vindicated some rights of Christian people ignored and trampled under foot for centuries?" He rarely gets beyond the *people's* rights and the human side of things. The Lord's rights, the Spirit's place, the Church's charter, the Word's authority, and the holiness and obedience due by those brought to God, have little or no place in our author's thoughts. Yet these things, "ignored or trampled under foot for centuries," have been made prominent by the Christians he so fails to understand. They can give him and others a fair statement of the truths which the Lord in His

mercy has used them to trace afresh from Scripture, but they cannot give him eyes to see, nor a heart to understand. Nor is the author, or any other who manifests such a spirit as is discerned in the following passage, likely to have eyes to see, till there is less self-sufficiency, and more brokenness and meekness of spirit :

“The Brethren parade before the unwary an array of ‘recovered truths,’ of which the Church has been robbed through the centuries by the carelessness, or ignorance, or prejudice of its professed teachers, but which have now been restored to it by the instrumentality and, it must be added, on the authority of the distinguished men with whom the nineteenth century has been blessed, but whose transcendent wisdom has been recognized only by the elect souls of the assembly.”—p. 522.

There is, on the one hand, a simple answer, better than a sneer, to the claim that Brethren have *recovered truths*: *produce the truths* from the centuries’ tomes of theology. There is, on the other hand, a short, decisive answer: the truths which characterize Brethren *cannot* be produced from the uninspired writings of eighteen centuries. But one fears that what the lecturer says concerning Wesley and his teaching, though the men and their work are very different, may, in a measure, apply to the lecturer and what he has written of Mr. Darby and the teaching and influence of Brethren. Here are his words:—

“The man who cannot thank God for such a work and feel that the nation owes a debt of gratitude to the man

who inaugurated it, or who prefers to substitute a caricature for the true portrait, by dwelling only on his eccentricities and weakness, because forsooth he belonged to another section of the Church, must be a narrow bigot."—p. 576.

Yet again the lecturer, like the stockman, comes under his own lash when he says:—

“There are few occupations in which any Christian could engage less profitably and more unworthily than the endeavour to detect all the faults in a Christian community. His judgment is sure to be unfair, and the effect on his own soul of this scrutiny into the errors and shortcomings of others most disastrous. The very spirit in which he enters on his observations helps to distort all that he sees. The eye is jaundiced, and its vision misleading.”

But some allowance must be made, as the lecturer admits that there is a great gulf between him and those he is reviewing. It is to be hoped, however, that wherever his strictures do hit the mark, as they do with some among Brethren, the lessons will be laid to heart. But we suppose a “narrow bigot,” here and there, among Independents, would not, for our author, entirely damn Congregationalism. To such a conclusion, however, his methods and reasoning, would lead us, as to Brethren, whom he cannot, or will not, distinguish from Brethrenism. His view is, as has been pointed out, the result of seeing the movements of the dancers without hearing the music.

## “CHRISTENDOM IN RUINS.”

“They proclaim Christendom to be in ruins, and, so far as their efforts are concerned, in ruins it will remain. Not by such an agency as this is sin to be vanquished, the world to be redeemed, and the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ established in its power and its glory.”

“The Christianity which it represents does but weep and sigh for days more blessed: it declaims against error which it does nothing to counteract; it denounces the world, but leaves to others the task of reforming it; it whines out its doleful lamentations over Christendom in ruins, but for those who are attempting in any degree to repair the evil, to free the Church of God from a bondage which the Brethren themselves are the first to reprobate, or to introduce into the regulation of the world’s affairs the principles of that kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, they have only censures, misrepresentations, and calumnies. The Christianity that is to do God’s work in this world must be made of sterner stuff.”—p. 530.

To effect a cure it is needful to know the disease and to apply the proper remedy. In regard to both, the lecturer’s ideas are defective, but “the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” He does not consider that what affects Christendom is a deadly malady. He has certainly the power of putting his ideas. It is matter for regret that they should, in connection with the state of Christendom, and with Brethren, be so much *his ideas*, rather than unvarnished facts, gained by an unbiased investigation. As to Brethren, from the author’s references,



and the statements made, and stale quotations from Judson and Spurgeon, it appears that reviews and the attacks upon Brethren have been more consulted than the literature of the leaders of the movement. There have been no pains taken to become acquainted with their real tenets. Not one important tenet is fairly represented, and certainly the lecturer has not honestly met a single position by argument and Scripture. He gives us suppressed sneers and irony, and plausible rhetoric, like these quotations, but there is no grappling with main issues, no fair dealing with subjects like the Church of God, Christianity proper, the presidency of the Holy Spirit, the state of Christendom, the Second Advent, or the nature of the earthly reign of the Lord during the Millennium.

But "Christendom in ruins," like many other important subjects, gets a passing glance. Here then let us inquire as to the prospect of the earthly reign of the Lord Jesus Christ being established as the lecturer proposes. This will lead us to look at facts and principles in connection with the state of Christendom. From the remarks quoted, as well as others, the lecturer hopes for "the world to be redeemed" by the introduction of the principles of Christ's kingdom into "the regulation of the world's affairs," and "to fill the world with the spirit of the gospel as the leaven leavens the barrel of meal into which it is cast." Apart from the question as to which is the good or which is the bad ingredient, this is not the method by which a woman leavens meal. The use of the figure is as loose as the author's thoughts about its signification. It was not the barrel of

meal, but three measures, indicating a limited, and possibly a divine sphere; and, as we have previously noticed, the meal is wholesome, while the leaven is corrupt; so that, instead of filling "the world with the spirit of the gospel," the figure rather points to the limited sphere—Christendom—being permeated with evil and fit for judgment. But detailed proof as to the meaning of leaven would lead us into too large a subject to be dealt with now. What we notice is that the lecturer's principle is one of fusion, renovation, or gradual improvement, and in this way he proposes "to purify the age" and "establish the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ." He sees progress and prosperity and looks onward in hope that the millennial age will be introduced by the gospel as it is now proclaimed.

Brethren, on the other hand, do see "Christendom to be in ruins," though they by no means speak and act as he represents. The view taken forbids such a course. The one sees ruin and approaching judgment: the other sees advancement and "sin to be vanquished." What then is likely to be the natural effect of these contrasted views on conduct, and on work for the Lord. This can easily be imagined if we think of a tottering tenement of five stories in height where every room is occupied by human beings. The lecturer's thought is that the tenement will stand; and he would calm the fears of the people by rousing others to attend to repairs. My judgment, on the other hand, is that the building is tottering, and that it may at any moment be the scene of a terrible catastrophe. Apart from the question

as to which of us is right, who, in the circumstances, is likely to be most decidedly in earnest? If the building is going to stand, the people need not be troubled, the repairs can be done at leisure, and in doing them you may add a little ornament and give a fine appearance with plaster and paint. But the building is disturbed at the foundation; the walls are cracked; they are off the perpendicular; the doors move with difficulty; the roof is settling down: get the people out or they will be entombed. Thus, instead of merely whining out doleful lamentations, as asserted by the lecturer, the natural effect of the views of Brethren will be the most energetic efforts to get saints and sinners roused up in connection with the impending crisis. The facts, likewise, when really known, harmonize with the views, notwithstanding the lecturer's "censures and misrepresentations." He knows little of the gospel work done by Brethren in many languages and climes throughout the world, and he might know if he cared to enquire and consider that, in proportion to their numbers, there are more of them seeking to influence others by the gospel than almost any other Christians. Besides evangelists wholly engaged in the work, about one out of every seven Brethren I have known, according to their ability, sought to put the gospel before the unsaved. But Brethren do not publish and parade before the world the work that is done. The *Catechism* and the *Lecture* here noticed, and Christians generally, in regard to gospel work, grossly misrepresent Brethren. With others, indeed, Brethren have to mourn the apparently small results,

yet a knowledge of the real facts, and of the numbers among Brethren, converted through their own instrumentality, would make their detractors feel ashamed. The gospel work in France, Germany, Switzerland, and other countries in Europe, by Mr. Darby, and those blessed through him, if told, would confound the lecturer. An association was once being formed for gospel work on the Continent, and the question was raised whether they would take in Brethren. One who knew the facts, at that time, said, Will the Brethren take in you? At present the work is all in their hands. This answers the lecturer's statement, "It is their distinction to reverse the principle of the apostle"—Rom. xv. 20. Further proofs could be furnished, from many lands, that this oft-repeated charge is positively untrue.

But to return, when Brethren do preach the gospel, and see souls converted, they are not animated by the thought of bringing in the Millennium. They know better what the Lord is doing. They see that the Holy Ghost is on earth calling out the Church, and preparing a bride for the Lord coming as the Bridegroom—Acts xv. 14-18. After this, through His appearing in power and glory, "the tabernacle of David," the promised earthly reign, will be brought in by judgment. God always divides the light from the darkness. Our author means to blend light and darkness. He may as well expect to succeed in this as to get the gospel and the spirit of the age to amalgamate. He must be a bold charioteer who would attempt to yoke the lion of Judah with the lion of hell. God never combines, He always

separates, good and evil. Indeed, divine principles are mechanical rather than chemical: they proceed by motion, or separation; not by mixture, or combination. In the Church, the precious is to be taken from the vile: in the world, at the introduction of the Millennium, the vile will be taken from the precious. The one is to be done by the saints: the other by the angels—1 Cor. v.; Matt. xiii. 41. But when there is mixture, the Lord says, "an enemy hath done this." This principle is always true.

All Scripture and all history are against the principle of gradual improvement, when failure has once appeared, yet this is the principle advocated by the lecturer. If the gospel was going to be the means of converting the world, it would surely have held its own where such triumphs were accomplished when Christianity was introduced. Jerusalem itself, the land of Palestine, and the cities and countries visited by Paul, are in much need of missionaries to-day. There is a poor prospect of the gospel converting the world when countries evangelized by apostles are, in the course of centuries, requiring to be re-evangelized. Yet such are the stubborn facts presented by history.

But the same principle is illustrated by all Scripture. Man set up in blessing is no sooner left to be tried than he fails to retain what he has received, and whatever temporary recovery there may be, the end of each trial is judgment. This is a solemn, far-reaching principle, which overthrows the dream of the lecturer about the purifying of the age and the reforming of the world. It was illustrated in

Eden where the first man was no sooner put at the head of creation than he fell, and the Lord drove out the man. Noah, through the flood, landed on a cleansed earth to begin anew. He was soon overcome of his very mercies, and presented a most humiliating spectacle. Lot went out from his kindred, and soon swerved from the path of blessing, and was found sitting in the gate of Sodom. Even Abraham failed in faith when tested by the famine and went down into Egypt. God, acting in mercy, can restore, yet how frequently restoration is succeeded by further failure, showing that man never maintains the vantage ground of grace. It requires the same power at work to keep, as to give, the position. As with individuals, so with corporate bodies, or nations. Israel is no sooner out of Egypt and tested in the wilderness than they turn back in heart to the house of bondage. Before Moses returned from the mount, the people had forgotten the awe-inspiring sights and sounds, when "the Lord descended upon it in fire;" and they were actually dancing before the golden calf. The tables of the law were broken before they reached the camp. The first services by the priesthood were not completed before Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire, and "they died before the Lord." When in the Land, one judge succeeded another, and bondage and deliverance followed in rapid succession. The ark was captured by the Philistines, and the high priest died. This made way for the king. The first king rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord rejected him. Solomon was not past the zenith of his glory

till he allied himself with heathen nations, and the shrines of their gods were found under the very shadow of the temple of the Lord. So, with all respect to the lecturer, the mournful tale proceeded till the kingdom was divided; the ten tribes were carried into captivity; the two tribes were also removed: Israel's wise men became eunuchs in the palace of Babylon; and the vessels of the House of the Lord were desecrated at the feast of Belshazzar. Power in the hands of the Gentiles, through the pride of the one to whom it was entrusted, issued in his having the food, the dwelling-place, and the heart of a beast. Further on the power committed to Gentile hands was used to send the Son of God to the cross. When the Lord took His place on the throne and the Holy Ghost on earth had formed the Church, the religious leaders had the apostles put in prison; but with the Church, as with man, that which really defiles, comes from within. There were those that lied to the Holy Ghost; others that murmured; some who introduced the leaven of Judaism; and there were even dissemblings, contentions, and divisions among the apostles and their co-workers. There was envy and strife and division and moral and doctrinal evil at Corinth. The very foundations were being sapped at Galatia. The seven churches of Asia betrayed the presence and the progress of many evils. Looking down the vista the apostle saw that there would be "grievous wolves" from without, and evil men within, "speaking perverse things." Even then there were "many antichrists" and "the mystery of iniquity" was at work—1 John ii. 18;

2 Thess. ii. 3-7. "The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils"—1 Tim. iv. 1. "In the last days perilous times shall come," and inside Christendom a state of things will ensue, with darker features than was found in heathenism, for the wickedness will be sought to be sanctioned by the name and authority of the Lord; and "evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived"—2 Tim. iii. These things are further confirmed in 2 Peter ii. and the Epistle of Jude; and all are in perfect harmony with the testimony of the Lord Himself, that instead of a converted world at the coming of the Son of Man, it will be like the world before the Flood, or like Sodom and Gomorrah, when they were destroyed by fire and brimstone from heaven—Matt. xxiv. 37-39; Luke xvii. 22-30.

Such is the uniform testimony of Scripture. It shows that the purifying of the age, and the filling of the world with the spirit of the gospel, in the present dispensation, is a vain dream. As well expect a huge land slip, or an avalanche, which have lapsed, to regain or maintain their position, as expect a dispensation which has failed to issue in anything else than the final crash of judgment. One would think that the fact that there are *church systems*, so diverse, and often so opposed to each other, would force home the conclusion that the end must be, not universal blessing, but signal judgment. That Scripture does hold out a future glorious consummation of blessing on the earth is unquestionable. It is



not the thing itself which we question, but the way in which it is to be inaugurated. The lecturer's idea of fusion, assimilation, purification, and gradual improvement, is all imagination. He cannot deny that failure has come into Christendom, nor can he show from Scripture that when such is the case, that the end can be other than it was with Israel in a former dispensation. We find this thought enforced in Rom. xi. Israel because of unbelief was "broken off," and the Gentiles, those to whom the gospel comes, were "grafted in," to enjoy God's goodness. In this outward place of privilege, they are put to test, to see if, unlike Israel, they will continue in God's goodness. The solemn warning, so much unheeded, is added, "If thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." It is then simply a question of facts. Has Christendom continued in the goodness of God? A thousand voices answer, No. We are apt to think merely of *Church Systems*, such as are dealt with by our author. There, indeed, there is enough to make any spiritual mind apprehensive of judgment. But what about the Greek Church, and the Church of Rome, with their enslaving and soul-destroying corruptions? These, be it remembered, profess Christ's name, and claim to be His representatives in the world. Not even our author would plead that such systems have abode in the goodness of God, or would he wish them, if it could be avoided, to "grow together" till the harvest. But they are part of Christendom, and the less corrupt protestant denominations are with them, like all three sufferers at the crucifixion,

involved in the same condemnation. But, blessed thought, all the real members of Christ's body, not merely the separate believers, like Abraham, but even those, like Lot mixed up in Sodom, will be far from the scene, for ever with the Lord, before the judgments of God sweep over Christendom. Once admit that there has been failure, or a lapse, and a more terrible falling away is inevitable. The words are there, clear as light, or red as fire, that proclaim the downfall of Christendom—" *Thou also shalt be cut off.*" The church boat has broken away; it is already in the rapids, and it is bound to shoot Niagara. In Christendom, those alone will escape who are "caught up" at the coming of the Lord.

A glance at the Church as it was in the mind of God, at the beginning, and as it is now in the hands of man, even in protestant denominations, will make the ruined state of things still more manifest. The Church was heavenly in its calling and character: its citizenship was in heaven, whence also it looked for the Saviour—Phil. iii. 20-21; Eph. i. 3, 18-23. In walk, ways, and hope, it was aptly represented by the virgins going forth to meet the Bridegroom. In that very parable, however, what the Church became in man's hand is strikingly portrayed: "They all slumbered and slept." The hope of the coming of the Lord was given up, and with it the heavenly character, so much so, that the Church was allied to the State and became a thing of the earth, by law established. Instead of maintaining its pilgrim and stranger character, it has become possessed of endowments, buildings, and lands, so as to rival the

largest and most earthly of corporations. It is strange, therefore, if it has not failed, and if Christendom is not in ruins.

At first, according to the mind of God, the Church was one body and a witness to the union of its members to Christ as the Head, and of the union of the members with one another. Instead of rendering such a testimony, the Church in man's hand has been divided into hundreds of sects, acting in rivalry, and often bitterly opposed to each other. It is not only that there has been failure in witnessing to the unity to be expressed: the understanding of what unity really means has been by many either lost or never apprehended. Further still, when true union has been taught from Scripture, and, in its principles, proposed to be represented, the teaching has not been received, and the meetings have been made the subjects of ridicule and misrepresentation. Those owning "one body, and one Spirit," and "one Lord," are said to be "creating a new sect, the most narrow, bitter, intolerant, and sectarian of any." That individuals among them have given cause for such remarks may be true, but to take practices which intelligent Brethren deplore and even rebuke, and represent them as the principles of Brethren, is an invidious endeavour to misrepresent their principles; and the fact that it is done, and believed, by earnest Christians, is strong proof that Christendom is in ruins.

At first the Lord added to the Church such as should be saved. They were builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. They wor-

shipped the Father in Spirit and in truth. The Lordship of Christ was owned by the individual; and the Holy Spirit was left free to lead and guide in the assembly. Divine order in regard to gifts and offices was observed. Holiness, separation from evil, and the exercise of discipline were regarded. Indeed, these, and the various features we have traced in earlier chapters, were as conspicuous by their presence, as they are now by their absence; and any candid mind that compares the Church as described in Scripture, with the state of things around him now, must admit that Christendom is in ruins. In almost every particular, as the writings of the early Fathers manifest, scriptural ideas as to the Church, and the distinctive features of Christianity, were lost near the beginning. Church history, so called, has been rather the history of the failing corrupted Church, than the history of what was inaugurated by the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, and described in the second and fourth chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

Then, at the beginning, the claims of the Lord, and His thoughts about saved souls, were the first considerations. The saints gave their riches away. At the end, when the corrupt Church comes under judgment, it is not without significance that the long list of the goods of mystic Babylon begins with "gold, and silver and precious stones," and ends with "slaves and souls of men"—Rev. xviii. 10-13. Thus when we look at the beginning, and at the end, and take notice of the features all the way through its

history, though what is real as built by the Lord cannot fail, we see, in contrast to the lecturer's dream of purifying the age, that the Church in man's hand is in ruins, and going on to certain and signal judgment. Christendom is a house full of strife and contention, and it is so divided against itself that it cannot stand—Mar. iii. 25.

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### THE RESOURCE OF THE REMNANT.

“The changes of our century have not involved the downfall of any of our church systems. It is possible to go further, and say that in none of them can be found any of those indications of decay, or even weakness, which would lead any candid or thoughtful observer to prophesy their approaching downfall.”—*Church Systems*, p. 12.

From what we have seen in the last chapter, it is clear that the lecturer is looking at the ecclesiastical map, rather than at the map of Scripture. He sees the churches of men: not the Church of God. He judges and reasons according to human, and even traditional ideas, principles, and habits of thought: not according to the word of God, divine principles, or as one who submits to, and tests everything by, Scripture. All his fine periods about liberty, peace and progress, and his denial of “indications of decay, or even weakness,” or the “approaching downfall” of “any of our church systems,” are “as a dream when one waketh” to hear God's voice, “*Thou also*

*shalt be cut off.*" The rumblings of a moral earthquake are waxing louder, and spreading wider and wider, till not merely one system, but all the systems of men, must disappear like the famous Pink and White Terraces by the eruption of Tarawera. "Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come"—Rev. xvii. 5; xviii. 10; 2 Thess. ii.; 2 Pet. ii.; Jude.

This being the divine forecast of events, in regard to the systems of men, as heading up into the false church, what are the hopes of the true Church? What is the resource of those who would be in the current of God's thoughts, in view of increasing corruption, final apostacy, and impending judgment? One broad principle can be read throughout the lessons of the ages. It is seen from Satan's success with man in Paradise, till he again succeeds in getting the nations to rebel at the end of the Millennium—Rev. xx. 7-9. This principle is, that God never reinstates what has fallen. He makes grace to abound where sin abounded, but it is always, not in setting that thing up again, but in bringing in something better. "Paradise regained" is a poet's dream. God brings in *another* Man, "the last Adam," and instead of a garden which ends with cherubims and a flaming sword guarding its gate and the tree of life, we have a "holy city," "the fountain of the water of life," "all things new," and the final kingdom in which God is "all in all."

There is another principle which runs parallel with the former principle in all God's ways. It may be thus expressed: No failure ever has come, or can

come, into anything God has set up, without the faithful in that period finding a resource in God, whenever they recognize the general ruin and return to God. In this connection, see Gideon and Samuel among judges, Hezekiah and Josiah among kings, and Ezra and Nehemiah, among "the remnant that are left of the captivity." How such a spirit as these manifested, meets God's heart and has His expressed approval, is frequently recorded. Caleb and Joshua, in contrast to the unbelieving mass, are said to "have wholly followed the Lord"—Num. xxxii. 12. The prophet heard of one to whom it was said, "Go, set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry, for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof"—Ezek. ix. 4. One is usually deeply interested in that for which he eagerly listens. Such is what is shown by God, when amid the ruin, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord and thought upon His name"—Mal. iii. 16. Among such were Simeon and Anna, and those that looked for redemption at Jerusalem—Luke ii. 25-38. In the prophetic sketch of the history of Christendom, as given in the seven churches, special notice is taken of such as may be found among a faithful remnant—Rev. ii., iii. Thus, on the one hand, what the lecturer brands with odium, saying, "it whines out its doleful lamentations over Christendom in ruins," is, on the other hand, throughout Scripture, when coming from hearts

bowed down about the ruin, shown to be the truest music for the ear and the heart of God.

Yet again we find another principle, when through failure, and the recognition of the failure, there is the turning to God: God Himself, and His word, are ever the resource of the remnant. This can easily be seen by referring to the instances just cited, where judge, king, scribe, and governor, sought to bring the people back to God and His word. The same is true in the New Testament. The angels, and even the risen Lord, when dispelling the darkness and unbelief of the remnant whose hopes seemed to be dashed to the ground by the crucifixion, make everything turn on *remembering* "how he spake," and the understanding and application of the Scriptures.—Luke xxiv. 6-7, 27, 44-46. So Paul says, foreseeing what was coming in at Ephesus, after his departure, "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace"—Acts xx. 29-32. Again, when a prisoner, and ruin had set in: in a day of ruin, he gave the description of, and the instruction for, the "last days," the "perilous times." The resource was the same: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God"—2 Tim. iii., iv. 1-1. There also, as with Peter, John, and Jude, in view of the same declension, the heart is directed on to the Lord's return—2 Peter i. 16-21; Jude 14; 1 John ii. 18-28.

If we now turn for a little to Ezra, we may learn from what is there said of the remnant, how we ought to act in our own times. Let it be borne in mind, that "all these things happened unto them as types: and they are written for our admonition"—1



Cor. x. 1-11. We may find here, therefore, the main principles, which have been pointed out as characterizing Brethren.

Israel, and even the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, for their sins, had been carried into captivity. In their history and condition, as in a mirror, may be seen the history and condition of the professing church. "The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus" so that he caused the remnant to return to Jerusalem. This was God's centre on the earth. So, within the last fifty years, God has wrought in causing some of His people to return to His true centre, the Name and Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not now Samaria, or Jerusalem, but "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"—John iv. 20-24; Matt. xviii. 20. As of old, so now. God and the word of His grace, are the resource of the remnant. Their proceeding to build the House aptly illustrates the effort that has been made to answer to what was constituted the habitation of God through the Spirit. What we find in Ezra vi. gives us striking resemblances on points of importance in connection with worship. They were recovering truth, by searching as to how things were done at the beginning. No reformers, or reformations however great, like Hezekiah or Josiah, or what was done through them, formed the model for the remnant. They went back to do "as it was written in the Book of Moses." So now, it has not been an appeal to the Reformers, or the early Fathers, but a fresh appeal to Scripture itself, as interpreted by

the Holy Spirit. Truths and principles, which have been neglected for centuries, have been brought to light and put into practice. God's early thought of the unity of the people, as set forth in the twelve loaves on the table of shewbread, the twelve stones in, and out of Jordan, and the twelve stones of the altar of Elijah, was again recovered and represented by "twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel, for a sin-offering for all Israel." It might have been said that they were a *mere sect* of two tribes, and a very *small sect* of the whole nation. As a fact that was true, but when they go to worship, instructed by the word, and in the reckoning of faith, nothing less than God's thought about all Israel is recognized. Thus we see what we have urged as to the owning of "the one body," and the refusing of anything like sectarian principles in connection with gathering and worship. The one loaf, as expressing the "one body," has only been used by a remnant during the last half century; and whatever others may say, it is not without its significance.

"The children of the captivity kept the passover." The instructions for this ordinance, in their various points of detail, are of importance to the remnant now, for "even Christ our passover was sacrificed for us." Hence the restoration of this feast, according to the word, now characterizes the remnant. As of old, it is kept at the right centre, at the proper time, as expressing unity, and with becoming holiness and separation. "The priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them pure," and "all

such as had separated themselves from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Isreal, did eat, and keep the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy." So now amid all the corruption and ruin such as separate themselves may remember the Lord, worship in Spirit and in truth, and taste the joy the Lord still deigns to vouchsafe to such as seek to keep His word and endeavour not to deny His name.

The children of the captivity were also preparing for their expected Messiah. In a clearer way, and with a brighter and more blessed hope, the remnant now, with girded loins and pilgrim attitude, "announce the Lord's death, till He come." While doing this, they, like those of old, seek to be not only a delivered, but a delivering, people. They will consider Paul's ministry in its double aspects: to the world, for the salvation of souls; and to the Church, for the making known "the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ among you the hope of glory"—Col. i. 23-28.

Throughout their history, the moral and spiritual state of the people of Israel may be accurately measured by the way they kept, or neglected to keep, the passover, and the way they attended to, or neglected, the House and worship of the Lord. Nationally, as tribes, as families, as individuals, their state may thus be discerned. So, throughout the history of Christendom, the Lord's Supper, and the scripturalness of worship, are a good criterion for testing how far failure has characterized this dispensation. With Israel and with us, of course, the word of God must

be brought to bear to see that the Lord is sought "after the due order," "according to the word of the Lord"—1 Chron. xv. 12-15.

Those who read these pages may now, by weighing these things in the presence of the Lord, see how far they are answering to the purpose of the Father, when in grace and compassion He sought such as we were to be made suitable to worship Him in Spirit and in truth—John iv. 23-24. Most of us have known, when at school, what it was to be brought specially under the eye of the master. Instead of being engaged with our sums, meeting the master's approval, his eye rested on us, and on the foolish, or naughty things, drawn or written, upon the slate. He was looking on them and on us. Detected, ashamed, and with altered thoughts about what we had been doing, we felt keenly the reproach of that settled look. The foolish things were put away, and humbled and self-judged, we turned to what was more profitable, no longer seeking to please ourselves, but to be occupied with the master's will, with what would answer to the purpose of our being at school, and what would meet the master's approval.

One would trust that where these pages are read with earnestness and reverence, there will be a similar profitable result. The Lord is walking in the midst of the candlesticks. He is discerning what is going on in the churches. Each believer is measured according to the Lord's thoughts about that believer's responsibility. The eyes of the Lord, "as a flame of fire," are in a judicial way searching each one through and through. If any one, through what

has here come before him, or otherwise, has become uneasy about his associations, this is the reason: the eye of the Master, of the Lord, is upon him; and hence his changed thoughts and feelings, his exercise and self-judgment. While that eye specially rests upon, and increasing light shines around, and within him, he has an opportunity, which, if not improved, may never return. One way to profit by the scrutiny of the Lord is to cease to go on with whatever has raised questions or exercised conscience. "Hethatdoubteth is judged," and "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Associations, service for the Lord, and the professed worship of the Lord, are all included in that "whatsoever." To excuse oneself, to continue to tamper, or trifle, with whatever has come under the Master's eye and our eye, at the same moment, so that thoughts and feelings are changed, and conscience exercised, is a solemn matter, in connection with which we must find that we have to suffer loss when it is manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. By refusing, or delaying to put the things away, or to come away from them, the Lord may, so to speak, take His eye off us, and we may loose the light, miss much blessing, and an opportunity of learning more fully the Master's will and earning His approval, when He will say, "Well done good and faithful servant," and not merely give a place with Himself, or the rule over many things, but He will say what is better: "enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"—Matt. xxv. 21.

One would gladly leave matters here by laying down the pen, but the question is likely to be asked,

especially by those who do not wish to have it answered, What about the divisions among Brethren? Do they not result in sects? It is a humiliating, sorrowful subject, to which one would not shut his eyes, nor decline to give an answer, as the Lord may enable him. It is admitted that there have been divisions, and another great division has taken place during recent years. But as the existence of, or the disruptions among, the denominations, do not disprove that there is "one body," the divisions among Brethren cannot alter the truth of God or divine principles. They do make the recognition of these, and the believer's path, much more difficult. But Scripture gives us this striking and significant statement: "There must also be sects among you that the approved may become manifest among you"—1 Cor. xi. 19. It is noticed throughout Scripture that a revival seldom remains intact till the second generation. When first love and first works are not discernable, it is for those who miss them to return to them and hold fast the characteristic features of the truth revived or recovered.

It is just because the Brethren chiefly assailed, endeavour to own the "one body" that their difficulties are so much increased. Owning the oneness of Christ's body, the discipline which takes place in Britain or America affects every little gathering throughout New Zealand and elsewhere, wherever two or three are gathered, owning the "one body." Hence a division in a single meeting may divide the meetings throughout the world. There is no resource but God and the word of His grace. Everything has

to be tested by and settled according to the word. With that word in one's hand, in one's heart, with becoming lowliness and meekness, one may see if any professed assembly is really owning *the principles*, and maintaining *the ground* of the Church of God, as the body of Christ. The marks have been before us and need not be repeated now at length. All Christians are recognized as the members of the body of Christ. Every one can be received who shows that he has life in Christ and is walking in holiness and in truth, calling upon the name of the Lord out of a pure heart. Where the word plainly condemns any one's conduct and associations, till he judges and clears himself, he cannot be received to the glory of God. But to make tests, as we have seen, of doctrines like views of baptism, or of the believer's standing, or of the nature of the life of all saints, or of assembly judgments, based upon such views, is to bring in sectarian principles. If before being received into a meeting, one is asked to endorse actions in discipline by certain assemblies, which actions have not been proved to have the sanction of the word, the simple ground of gathering is changed, and though they may be Brethren, professing to have all characteristic truths, one has the word of God for refusing to go into such a fellowship. Again if one is asked to repudiate the views referred to, before being received to fellowship, and these views have never been shown to be contrary to plain Scriptures, or that they affect the Person or work of Christ, one is justified in refusing such conditions as the imposing of a negative creed. In the former

case the principle of the one body has been ignored by other assemblies interfering with, and rejudging local matters belonging to, and previously settled by, the assembly of the place. In the latter case, the Lordship of Christ and His servant's responsibility to Him have been meddled with and practically set aside. The principles of clerisy and independency have also marred the leading of the Spirit in the assembly. In contrast to what was known at the beginning, there has been a complete break-down in the exercise of godly discipline.

Such, in brief, are some of the principles involved in recent divisions. Instead of such things proving that Brethren are all wrong, it might be the very opposite. The closer the relationship, the clearer the light, or the more advantageous the place of privilege, the more searching will be the scrutiny, the more severe the discipline, or the judgment of the Lord. The old prophet, living among the corruptions of Bethel was left alone, while the young prophet whom he turned aside from testimony met with sudden judgment—1 Kings xii., xiii. Of Israel God says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for your iniquities"—Am. iii. 2. The same is true now, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten"—Rev. iii. 19. If Brethren are more tested, more troubled, more assailed by the enemy, than other Christians, it may only prove, as with Nehemiah and his band, that they are in the van of testimony, and in the place where the vigilant and the faithful alone can hold their ground, or have the courage and the



honour to build, or to lead a forlorn hope. It must ever be so with the loyal remnant of the Lord's host. Nothing of the past will guarantee their standing in the next assault. The grace that puts them forward alone can maintain them in the van. Nothing will stand but reality. They can never retire with their laurels. Obedience to, dependence on, confidence in, and the joy of the Lord, must be known like every day drill, and also be the secret of their strength in work, and all warfare. When the ranks are thinned, they must fall back afresh upon God and His word.

Those who now remain on the ground of the Church of God, are a remnant of a remnant. This, however, is a very different thing from their taking that position themselves by separating from their brethren, and assuming that, on this account, they are a special remnant. Such a thought, such a spirit, is in every way to be deprecated. Except for the attacks and prejudicial misrepresentations, which have been noticed, as enquirers might be invidiously affected by them, one would feel that it was out of place, in any way, to appear to be praising Brethren, or indulging in a spirit of self-complacency. The very opposite becomes them, as none are seen to have so failed, when failure is measured by the light, the grace, and the privileges conferred; and if they are not to become like salt without savour, they must go on with God, with grace, with truth, with holiness, with lowliness, and with the largeness that in reality thinks of all saints and of all sinners, and

God will go on with them. To do this they must find the word, recognize their relationship, own God's hand, be separate and count upon God Himself. Then He can make good this word, "If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth"—Jer. xv. 15-19.



## The Lord's Second Coming.

The truth of the Lord's Second Coming is possibly not set forth in one of every thousand sermons preached. Preachers and hearers might be amazed and interested to discover that there are direct testimonies or allusions to the subject in every book of the New Testament except the short letter to Philemon. When faith and affection note attentively the frequent, the full and blessed manner in which a coming Lord is presented, as the proper hope of the Christian and the Church, the Bible becomes a new book, and the Coming of the Lord is a well-spring of joy, and a new spiritual force in the every day life of the believer who is waiting for Him.

It is a mistake to think that the Coming of the Lord is a mere view or theory. Scripture presents the subject as a *fact*. He will come to take His own to heaven as Enoch was taken up before judgment overtook the earth by the flood. In 1 Thess. iv. 13-18 we have "the word of the Lord" for His coming into the air, when His saints will be "caught up" to meet Him. This is a special revelation on the subject, and this divine fact, apart from other texts, ought to settle the matter for every believer whose mind is subject to Scripture.

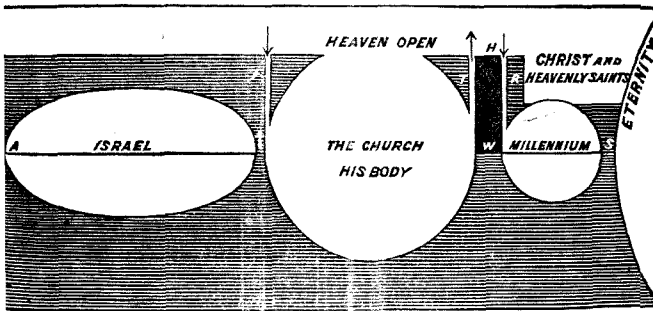


DIAGRAM OF DISPENSATIONS.

The Oval shows the *past* dispensation previous to the Cross, with *heaven closed*: the large Circle, the *present* dispensation, with *heaven open*: the small Circle, the *future* dispensation when Christ and the heavenly saints will *reign* over the earth during the Millennium: the beginning of a great Circle shows that dispensations will give place to the eternal ages.

A.—The line which runs through the Diagram from A to S and Eternity, except in the Circle—the Church—is to represent the course of events from the call of Abraham to Eternity.

ISRAEL.—This line represents the period of God's dealings with Israel as a nation under government from the call of Abraham to the cross—Deu. iv. 32-38; xxxii. 8-12; xxxi. 29; Ps. cxlvii. 19-20; Amos iii. 1-2; Acts vii.

F.—This opening shows the ascension of Christ and the descent of the Spirit for the formation of the Church. Acts i. 2, 9-11; ii. 1-4, 33, 41-42, 46-47; 1 Cor. xii. 12-13; Eph. 1, 20-23.

CHURCH PERIOD.—This Circle represents the present period of grace, extending from Pentecost till the Lord comes into the air. The line indicating the course of events is not run through the Circle because God's dealings with Israel are meanwhile suspended. Israel as the earthly people are rejected for their rejection of Christ, and the Church is called out from Jews and Gentiles as a new and heavenly people to be presented to the Lord as a bride when He comes as the Bridegroom—Rom. xi. 25; xvi. 25-26; Matt. xvi. 16-18; Eph. ii. 19-22; iii. 1-11; v. 23-32.

T.—This opening shows the Coming of the Lord for the translation of the Church, when the sleeping saints participate in the first resurrection, the living believers are changed and both are caught up together to meet the Lord in the air—1 Thess. iv. 13-18; 2 Thess. ii. 1; 1 Cor. xv. 20-23, 52.

H.—This is to show that during this period in heaven the saints will be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, and the marriage supper of the Lamb will be celebrated—John xiv. 1-3; xvii. 24; Rev. xix. 7-9; Rom. xiv. 10-12; 1 Cor. iii. 8-15; iv. 5; 2 Cor. v. 10.

W.—This short space between the circles indicates the future period of lawlessness, the time of Antichrist and of the judgments coming on the earth, between the present period of grace and the Millennium—2 Thess. i. 7-10; ii. 3-12; Rev. vi-xix.

R.—This opening represents the Lord's Return to the earth, the glorious appearing for the overthrow of Antichrist, the judgment of the living nations, the binding of Satan and the bringing in of the Millennial Reign—Matt. xiii. 40-42; xxiv. 27-31; xxv. 31-46; Rev. xix; xx. 1-3; and references to W.

MILLENNIUM.—This Circle represents the period of the Millennium, the thousand years during which a restored Israel will be the centre of the kingdom then established in power throughout the whole earth—Dan. vii. 18-22; Jer. iii. 14-19; xxiii. 5-6; Isa. xi. 1-9; Ez. xxxvii. 19-28; Zec. xiv. 16-17; Rom. xi. 26; Rev. xx. 1-6.

S.—This indicates the letting loose of Satan after the Millennium—Rev. xx. 7-10.

ETERNITY.—This indicates the beginning of Eternity, when the wicked dead will be judged, and the new heavens and the new earth created, and the joy of the everlasting ages will begin—Rev. xxi. 7.

The Four Different Judgments may be understood by a Careful Study of the following Table :

| SUBJECT OF JUDGMENT.  | PERIOD.   | PLACE.  | REFERENCES.  | OBSERVATIONS.  |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| I.<br>Of SIN, which has passed for the BELIEVER, <i>Christ</i> having been judged for his sins, and he himself "crucified with Christ." Hence, "he...SHALL NOT COME INTO JUDGMENT." | <b>Past.</b><br>When the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross, more than eighteen centuries ago.       | On Calvary.   | John iii. 18<br>John v. 24<br>Rom. vi. 6<br>Rom. viii. 1-3<br>2 Cor. v. 14, 21<br>Gal. ii. 20<br>Heb. ix. 26 | Many of God's dear children are kept from having "peace with God" through the supposition that they have yet to be judged for their sins. <i>Such is not the case, blessed be God.</i> For Christ has been judged in their place—"HAS APPEARED TO PUT AWAY SIN by the sacrifice of Himself," and the Holy Ghost says, "YOUR SINS AND INIQUITIES WILL I REMEMBER NO MORE." Moreover, the believer is "PERFECTED FOR EVER," and "SHALL NOT COME INTO JUDGMENT;"—Heb. x. 14-17,   |
| II.<br>Of the REDEEMED (of all ages) when each "shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."  | <b>Future.</b><br>After they have been "caught up" in glorified bodies to "meet the Lord in the air." | Before the "Judgment Seat of Christ."                                       | Mat. xvi. 27<br>Rom. xiv. 10, 12<br>1 Cor. iii. 8-15; iv. 5<br>2 Cor. v. 10<br>Rev. xxii. 12                 | <b>BUT</b><br>Believers "must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ," to "receive REWARDS" or "suffer LOSS," according to their works on earth. IT WILL NOT BE A QUESTION OF HEAVEN OR HELL (since they are all previously in heaven, in "bodies of glory") but of what reward (if any) they are to get when there. St. Paul has been "with Christ"—so has the thief—for hundreds of years. It has not yet to be decided whether they are fit to be there!   |
| III.<br>Of the LIVING "NATIONS" on the earth, divided like sheep and goats, according to their treatment of the faithful Jewish Remnant, called "my Brethren."                      | At the commencement of the Millennium, or Christ's Reign of 1000 years.                               | The "Valley of Jehoshaphat" at the base of the Mount of Olives.             | Joel iii. 3, 16<br>Zech. xiv. 1-9<br>Mat. xxv. 31-46   | Matt. xxv. 31-46, compared with Joel iii. 3-16, and Zech. xiv. 1-9, show that this judgment is confined to the LIVING NATIONS (GENTILES) on the earth when the Lord Jesus returns to reign, while Judgment IV. takes place at least 1,000 years later.<br><br>N.B. <del>See</del> CONTRAST JUDGMENT III—Matt. xxv. WITH JUDGMENT IV—REV. ix.<br>1. The Son of Man, on the throne of His glory<br>2. The scene of Judgment is on the earth<br>3. The then living nations gathered<br>4. Three classes—sheep, goats, brethren<br>5. Judged, according as they treated my brethren<br>6. Divided, right hand, blessed; left hand, cursed<br>1. God, a great white throne<br>2. Earth and heaven fled away<br>3. The dead small and great<br>4. One class—the wicked dead<br>5. Judged from books, according to works<br>6. One company cast into the lake of fire |
| IV.<br>Of the UNCONVERTED DEAD.   | After the close of Millennium, or Christ's reign of 1000 years.                                       | Before "the Great White Throne," after the earth and heaven have fled away. | Rev. xx. 11-15   | This judgment is confined to the only remaining class; viz., the UNCONVERTED DEAD of all ages, who are condemned to their awful doom in the LAKE OF FIRE for ETERNITY.<br><br>N.B. <del>See</del> From attention being given to the above, it will be seen that the very commonly received theory of a GENERAL JUDGMENT is insupportable from Scripture, and confounds the truth, inasmuch as the accounts of the SUBJECT, PERIOD, PLACE, and MANNER of the different judgments bear no resemblance to each other.—J.C.T.  |

REFERENCES TO THE SECOND COMING OF THE LORD.

MATTHEW, vi. 27, 28; xix. 28; xxiii. 39; xxiv. 3, 27, 30-31, 37-39, 42, 44, 48-51; xxv. 6, 10, 13, 19, 31; xxvi. 64. MARK, viii. 38; xiii. 26, 27, 35-37; xiv. 61, 62. LUKE, ix. 26; xii. 36-40, 43, 45, 46; xiii. 35; xvii. 24, 30; xviii. 8; xix. 12, 13, 15; xxi. 27, 36; xxii. 69. JOHN, xiv. 3, 28; xvi. 16, 22. ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, i. 9-11; iii. 19-21. ROMANS, xi. 25, 26. 1 CORINTHIANS, i. 7, 8; iv. 5; xi. 26; xv. 23, 24. PHILIPPIANS, i. 6, 10;

ii. 16; iii. 20, 21; iv. 5. COLOSSIANS, iii. 4. 1 THESSALONIANS, i. 10; ii. 19; iii. 13; iv. 13-18; v. 1-4, 23. 2 THESSALONIANS, i. 6-11; ii. 1-8; iii. 5. 1 TIMOTHY, vi. 14. 2 TIMOTHY, iv. 8-18. TITUS, ii. 13. HEBREWS, ix. 28; x. 37. JAMES, v. 7, 8. 1 PETER, i. 7, 13; iv. 13; v. 4. 2 PETER, i. 16, 19; iii. 10, 11, 14. 1 JOHN, ii. 28; iii. 2. JUDE, 14-16. REVELATION, i. 7; ii. 25; iii. 3, 11; xvi. 15; xix. 11-16; xx. 11; xxii. 7, 12, 20.