

# Plymouthism

and

# The Modern Churches

or

# Life, Light, Law and Learning

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PLYMOUTHISM  
AND  
THE MODERN CHURCHES  
OR  
LIFE, LIGHT, LAW AND LEARNING.

“I was constrained to write unto you, exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.”—JUDE 3.

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I.

*PRELIMINARY.*

THE CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS TRUTH.

**A**MONG the important duties assigned the Church by her divine Head are those of ascertaining, proclaiming, and, when necessary, defending, the truths contained in the Holy Scriptures. Souls are neither converted nor sanctified by means of error, but through the truth. And the Church has been constituted “the pillar and ground of the truth.” She must, therefore, be neither indifferent nor inert in the presence of what she believes to be serious error on vital subjects.

The Church is warranted to expect that when there is true unity among her members, she shall be more effective in every part of her mission. Our Lord prayed for her unity. But her unity and peace have, alas, many enemies; and it is sad that among these should have to be reckoned that body of people professing the Christian religion, and usually known by the name of “Plymouth Brethren.” It is not here alleged, however, that the Brethren would willingly and knowingly oppose what they believe to be the cause of Christ, or true Christianity. But, then, some of the greatest crimes ever known were committed in the name of God, conscience, and the true religion. We are responsible not only for the light we have, but also,

in some measure, for the light we might have had were it not for our remissness.

The ultimate victory of the Church over all that may oppose, is, indeed, divinely assured. She shall be more than a conqueror. She shall, while militant, evermore continue to be "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." But the joyous assurance thus vouchsafed the Church shall in nowise lessen the responsibility of any who may seek to destroy her unity, mar her efforts, or oppose her triumphant march.

#### PROVISIONAL EPITOME OF PLYMOUTHISM.

In the Brethren's view the various branches of the modern Church are all in ruins, and in fatal and irreclaimable apostasy. The Church's various organizations, her formal creeds, her office-bearers, and particularly her "one-man," "man-made," college-bred, and (equally bad) her regularly paid, ministry, are all, the Brethren think, on a sinful basis, grievous to the Holy Spirit, and exposed to the divine anger. The modern churches are regarded as forming the Babylon mentioned in the book of Revelation, and will at length meet with Babylon's doom. (Revelation xviii.)

Out of this Babylon the Brethren look upon it as their special mission to bring any true Christians who may possibly still be there, so that they may join the Brethren themselves, "on the basis of the one body and the one spirit." The churches are called "the systems around," and sometimes "the sects"; and "all sectarianism is sin," quoth the Brethren. The members of each "system" are regarded as being bound together, not by the bond of a real Christian brotherhood, but by certain opinions merely, which they have agreed to hold in common, and which are usually set forth in a "man-made" creed. The Brethren themselves have no creed, they say, but the Bible.

The Brethren further regard themselves as the only body of people who are "gathered" to, and presided over in, their meetings by the Holy Spirit. They believe also that, as a body, they alone have Spirit-guided speakers; and it would, in the Brethren's view, be quite sinful, and interfere with one of the special prerogatives of the Divine Spirit, if any speaker should prepare beforehand for addressing a religious meeting. The Holy Spirit ought to be allowed to "use" any one present that He may please to address the meeting. The "one-man" ministry interferes, the Brethren think, with this order of things, and it also forms a sinful barrier to the freedom of personal access to God on the part of each individual Christian.

Among other doctrines held and taught by the Brethren are the following:—

The humanity which our Lord took upon Him "was neither that of Adam before the fall, nor after the fall," but a "heavenly humanity." He made atonement for sin by His sufferings on the cross alone. His other sufferings were non-atoning. He did, indeed, keep the

divine law, but not in the room and stead of His people. Yet He freed His people, not only from the curse of the law, but also from the obligation to keep the law of the Ten Commandments as a rule of life. The life which Christ had here He left in the grave, and rose with an entirely new one, which believers share with Him. His Second Coming shall be witnessed by the saints of the New Dispensation only, and these shall enjoy a "secret rapture" at this Coming. They shall then be taken away from the earth to be with the Lord until a third coming, which shall take place, along with the saints, to judge the world. The saints of the Old Dispensation, although saved by Christ through faith, yet shall never be united to Him, and shall occupy an inferior position in glory to that occupied by the saints of the New Dispensation. A great part of the gospels, the Brethren maintain, was meant for a "Jewish remnant" only, and is inapplicable to the saints of the New Dispensation.

The Brethren also believe and teach, that if a sinner credits the divine testimony regarding Christ's death, he is at once saved, sinless, and perfect in the "new man," and as fit for heaven there and then as he ever can be made. The "old man" is, indeed, still present, and is the sole cause of any sin the Christian may commit. This "old man" is incorrigible. He can neither be made any better nor any worse than he is. Yet, inconsistently enough, the Brethren speak of "progressive sanctification," and of denying the flesh. But in reality there is no room left for these things in their system. The Christian may confess sin, say the Brethren, but he need not ask for pardon. They teach that it would be "almost blasphemy" to pray for the Holy Spirit, since He has been already given. It is useless, the Brethren think, for the unconverted to pray at all. The Christian ought not to sorrow for sin in him, for were he to do so, it would mar his worship, happiness, and testimony, and would be dishonoring to God. The Sabbath, having been a Jewish institution, has been abrogated. The Christian ought to keep the Lord's day, because the apostles did so, but there is no express divine command on the subject.

The Brethren hold also several other peculiar doctrines, a few of which shall afterwards be mentioned, and quotations shall be made from acknowledged Brethren writers. There is hardly an article of the reformed faith which the Brethren do not either deny altogether or else seriously modify.

#### A PLYMOUTH COMPLAINT.

With respect to the tenets already mentioned, let it be noted first, that if the members of our churches could only be got to take the Brethren's view of what these churches really are—little better, if any, according to that view, than mere synagogues of Satan—then the special mission which the Brethren suppose to be theirs, which is to pull down those synagogues, would be successfully accomplished. Can it be rightly supposed to be the duty of ministers, and all other

members of churches, to stand silently by whilst such a supposed mission is being conducted among them? To entertain the belief that not much, if any, harm to one's own interests is likely to accrue from such a supposed mission, can hardly be considered as a sufficient reason for neutrality.

Let it also be noted, in view of the tenets of Plymouthism, and of the persistent conduct of the Brethren in trying to wile away members from the churches, how very strange is the complaint made by the Brethren, as, for instance, by Mr. Reid, in his tractate, entitled "Accusers of the Brethren," that the churches do not let them alone to do their work in peace and quietness. Mr. Reid reminds us, in this connection, of our Lord's injunction: "Forbid him not." But he is careful never to mention what the Brethren regard as their special mission. In an article on "Plymouth Brethren" in Schaff-Herzog's "Encyclopædia of Religious Knowledge," by one who signs himself "E. E. Whitefield, M.A. (Oxf. Member Brethren)," the chief tenets of the Brethren will be found summarized with a degree of honesty unfortunately to be met with among the Brethren but seldom. Mr. Whitefield acknowledges that "the testimony [of the Brethren] is in the main as to the church." Mr. Reid's tractate is ostensibly a reply to a work, entitled "Plymouth-Brethrenism Unveiled and Refuted," by the late Rev. Dr. W. Reid, a well-known minister of the U. P. Church, Edinburgh. Dr. Reid's book states clearly what the Brethren regard as their special mission, yet the tractate written in reply takes no notice of the fact, whilst complaining loudly of the book. Let the Brethren alone, says Mr. Reid in effect, whilst at the same time he descants on and lauds the prowess and faithfulness of Brethren writers in forbidding and opposing other denominations whilst doing the work they deem to be right. Mr. Reid's tractate is only about a twelfth part of the size of the one to which it professes to be a reply, and this of itself would show how largely the bare-assertion mode of argument, a favorite method of discussion with Brethren writers, is had recourse to by the author. We will revert to Mr. Reid's tractate afterwards.

The Plymouth Brethren are virtually, if not also professedly, "robbers of the churches." "They come not but that they may steal the sheep." What the Brethren, therefore, regard as their special mission, the churches are bound, we should think, to regard as a persistent attempt to pull down what God intends to build up—to destroy what He intends to cherish.

The Brethren often remind us that it is not necessary to be "learned" in order to be converted. Who ever said it was? But by such remarks they seem to aim at disparaging the educated ministry in the churches. One verse of Scripture might be the means of converting one, but it is a very different thing to be in possession of as much knowledge as may be the means of conversion, and to profess to be the only true gospel preachers, and Bible interpreters, in Christendom.



## THE PLAN OF THIS PAMPHLET.

It is not intended in these pages to enumerate *all* the peculiar tenets of Plymouthism. Such enumeration is more completely given in such works as that of Professor Croskery, and that of Dr. Reid, on the subject, works which the Brethren would do well to ponder. In this pamphlet several features and characteristics of the system are brought under review, which the writer has not seen noticed, or at least dwelt upon, in any other work. A few fundamental errors of the system, as far as Scripture doctrine is concerned, are selected for more particular treatment as space permits. The side which the writer believes to be the correct and scriptural one will be set forth, as well as what he deems to be the erroneous one of the Brethren.

We could wish to treat of Plymouthism without at the same time treating of the Brethren in connection therewith. But this is impossible. Brethren's souls are precious. Plymouthism is unscriptural, irrational, and dangerous. One object of these pages is to render some aid, if possible, in separating the precious from the vile. Another may be inferred from the well-known proverb, "Prevention is better than cure." Let it be added that the sub-title of this pamphlet is taken from the subjects of the concluding chapters, instead of, as is more common, from the first chapter. The other chapters may be regarded as virtually an extension and as illustrative of the concluding ones. The first nine chapters are occupied with evidence of a presumptive nature—evidence, that is, on the first blush—against Plymouthism. The next seven contain evidence of a more direct kind; whilst in the remaining chapters, evidence of both the kinds mentioned is furnished.

## II.

### *HISTORICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PLYMOUTHISM.*

#### PLYMOUTHISM COMMENCED IN EDEN.

**S**ELF-WILL, hatred to light and law, the "peace, peace" of the false prophets, spurious assurances, hidden policy in religion, clandestine proselytism, attempted and unwarrantable short-cuts to religious ends, all began in Eden. Attempted short-cuts form the very bane of Plymouthism, and are now characteristic of several religions. The tempter sought to induce our Lord himself to adopt short-cuts, and he evidently deems it a "taking" kind of temptation for professors.

Simply eat, virtually said the tempter, and ye shall be knowing and God-like. There is virtue to regenerate in the baptismal water, says the Romish Church. There is virtue also in this wafer, says she, and in those chips from coffins, and those rags from garments, of departed saints. Simply take, or touch, or have applied. Let me only look on Mahomet's grave, says the pilgrim of Medina, and I am blessed for ever. A flash on the soul for me, says the mystic. Or call it "the inner light" chimes in the Quaker. Simply believe that Christ died for you, proclaim the Sandemanian, the Morrisonian, the Plymouth Brother, and the Arminian evangelist who wants to turn out results quickly. Take this view of the divine record of Christ's finished work, be determined to regard your view as right, and your determination will convert your view into saving faith and full assurance. After this you can "reckon" yourself to be whatever you wish. "Reckon," or "count" yourself dead to the moral law as a rule of life, perfectly holy with Christ's holiness, the "old man" within you as committing all your sins, and if you hold your views strongly enough, you can "reckon" yourself as fit for heaven now as ever you can be made.

If men could have the blessings of religion by a wave of the wand, a grip like the free mason's, the pronouncing of a shibboleth, or a reckoning of themselves this or that at pleasure, the whole world would very soon become religious. Many have been the attempts to get relief from the moral law by trying to prove that it has been abrogated altogether, or that its cords have been slackened. The Jesuits teach that it cannot be expected of Christians to love God always. Once in five years is enough, or once a year say some of them. Once a week, say some Protestants, or at communion seasons, is enough.

After Eve had fallen, she was used to tempt Adam. Adam's dutiful love for Eve was taken advantage of to bait a trap. Some still are taken aside through affection or regard for those who have fallen.

## KORAH AND HIS COMPANY WERE PLYMOUTHISTS.

Probably the first time that conspiracy and rebellion resulted from the restraints of having divinely appointed office-bearers among God's people, was in the case of the rebellion of Korah and his company of old. In Numbers xvi. we read:—

“Now Korah . . . took men . . . and they assembled themselves together against Moses, and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?”

We learn from Moses that the real cause of the murmuring was jealousy. This was at the root of what sought to palm itself off as a desire to realize the condition of equal rights in a common religious brotherhood. This is just the condition which the Brethren profess to aim at realizing in religious matters. It is analogous to the condition professed to be aimed at by the notorious infidel, Thomas Paine, in secular matters, and now professed to be aimed at by anarchists, communists, nihilists, and the lower socialists.

The apostles warn us against “murmurers,” “complainers,” those who “despise government,” who are “not afraid to speak evil of dignities,” beguilers of unstable souls, liars in wait to deceive, men “who separate themselves,” and who are in danger of perishing “in the gainsaying of Korah.” (1 Cor. x. 11, 12; 2 Peter ii.; Jude.)

## THE MONTANISTS OF THE SECOND CENTURY WERE PLYMOUTHISTS.

The earliest precursors of the Brethren since apostolic times were the Montanists of the second century. Montanus, the founder of the sect, was a native of Phrygia. He was a weak-minded man, and had newly left heathenism and embraced Christianity, when he professed to be the Paraclete promised by Christ to lead His people into all truth. He had had divine visions, he said, and he would ever and anon go into a frenzied state, like the modern spiritualist, and thus deliver his message. The Montanists regarded all ordinary church members as only “psychic Christians,” that is, Christians who had nothing else in their religion except mere natural minds, affections, and passions; whereas themselves they regarded as the only true “spiritual Christians.” They also objected, as the Brethren do, to the ordinary trained ministry and to church organization. They contended that the whole guidance of congregations should be left in the hands of the Montanist prophets. These prophets professed to have had visions from God, and would rise in congregations whilst the ordinary service was proceeding, and deliver their messages. The sober-minded regarded them as possessed by evil spirits. The Montanists were at length expelled from the Church, and dragged out a precarious existence in some places for two hundred years.

## PLYMOUTHISM SPRANG DIRECTLY FROM IRVINGISM. ·

The immediate precursor of Plymouthism was Irvingism. So says the famous church historian Kurtz, and he classes both among the heresies of their day. Edward Irving was a Scotch clergyman of some considerable genius, perfervid in imagination, eloquent, and fond of splendor in everything, religion included. He was settled as pastor of a London congregation, England, in August, 1822. It is said that he had specially prepared himself, as he thought, "for teaching imaginative men, and legal men, and scientific men, who bear the world in hand."

Irving's peculiar style of oratory gathered around him at first many of those very classes he desired. It is said that "Sunday after Sunday his church was crowded with statesmen, philosophers, poets, painters, literary men, merchants, peers, fashionable ladies, mingled with shopkeepers and mechanics, whilst many hundreds were unable to obtain admission." But in the course of about two years the novelty of Irving's oratory began to wear off, and so also did the attendance of the *elite*. The super-sensitive heart of Irving was wounded to the quick. He perceived that what he had thought his special mission had failed, and he came to think the world incapable of betterment. It is said that his despair produced a virtual suspension of his mental faculties. For comfort he betook himself to an intense study of the Second Coming of our Lord, a study then very common. He attended several private meetings for the study of this subject.

Irving read, translated, and published with a preface of his own, a work of Ben-Ezra, a Spanish Jesuit, on the Second Advent. This book exercised a great influence over his mind. It was probably here that he got the theory of "the secret rapture of the saints" at the Coming of Christ, which he transmitted to the Brethren. Pierre Lambert, another of the Jesuit fathers, also treats of "the secret rapture." The idea is in all probability a product of the Jesuit imagination. Irving predicted that our Lord would come in 1868. This great event was apparently to him an indispensable requisite for the sustenance of his spirits in the disappointment he underwent through the failure of his supposed mission. The expected event was an essential contrast to the melancholy times, as he viewed them, in which he lived, and which "his morbid imagination pictured as robed in the gloomy draperies of the reign of Satan." (Ency. Brit., Art. Irvingism; National Ency., Art. Irvingism.)

## AN EXTRAVAGANT RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT NEAR THE CLYDE. ·

It is to Irving also that the Brethren are indebted for their idea of the modern churches being Babylon, and for their fancy that they have the only Spirit-guided speakers in Christendom. He witnessed an extravagant movement, professedly of a religious nature, which took place near the River Clyde, Scotland, in his time. In this

movement it was professed that the "gifts" of "healing," "prophecy," "speaking with tongues," "working miracles," etc., had been restored to the people concerned.\* Irving's fertile imagination here found congenial pabulum. He went home and lectured to his people on "the gifts," and formed the conception that it was on account of the apostasy of the Church that these gifts were not continued. Here again we see Irving's reaction from despondency, his innate love of grandeur, and the desire in him common to too many besides, of grasping by short-cuts at all that is highest and best in Christianity, and enjoying it, without the exercise of the patience, self-denial, the purifying fire, and the proper and persevering study, that are not seldom necessary as a preparation for such enjoyments.

### IRVINGITES CLAIM THE "CHARISMATA."

All the internal tendencies mentioned would likely have had some effect in preventing Irving from seeing his mistake, when he supposed that the "gifts," or "charismata," which were common among ordinary church members before the divine revelation was completed, were meant to be permanent gifts in the Church. We have reason to believe that the "charismata" had ceased even before the end of the apostolic period. Timothy and Titus were without the "gifts" in the form of "charismata." The law for each of them was, "Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them." There was no church in apostolic times that enjoyed the "charismata" more than the Church in Corinth, and there was, at the same time, no church that had more strife, divisions, corruptions, errors, and backwardness in spiritual growth, than this church. Special holiness was not a necessary pre-requisite for the "charismata." Even Balaam could "prophecy," although he "loved the wages of unrighteousness." But in Irving's views and conduct in reference to the "gifts," we have the explanation of the insistence of the Brethren that the Holy Spirit ought to be allowed to "use" whomsoever He pleases to address a religious meeting.

Irving went on lecturing to his congregation on the "gifts" until what he imagined to be these very "gifts" at length made their appearance, first in the weekly prayer-meeting, and then in the ordinary Sabbath service. One after another would get up in the church, whilst the ordinary service was in progress, and would "prophecy," or "speak in a tongue" that nobody could be found who had ever known or heard, and which in all probability was no tongue at all, but simply any inane gibberish that the vocal organs could be got to utter. "Chaos and Bedlam!" exclaimed Carlyle, who was Irving's intimate friend, and who witnessed the whole proceedings. Such, then, was the fountain pure of many of the Brethren's conceptions as to how a religious meeting ought to be conducted.

The better part of Irving's already diminished congregation were

\* See Mrs. Oliphant's Life, and Principal Tulloch's "Movements of Religious Thought."

scandalized, and left. Several of the supposed gifted ones, who had been the direct cause of the exit, came forward after a little, and confessed that their "prophesying," or "speaking with tongues," had been merely a wilful imposture on their part. Little wonder although no one could be found who had ever heard the "tongues" elsewhere. Still, strange to say, the "faithful" were not disturbed. Irving himself, being a man of determined character, declared, notwithstanding the confessions of imposture, that he could not "stop the work of the Lord."

#### IRVINGITE PROPHETS "UNDER THE POWER."

Apostles, prophets, and angels (pastors), as of old, soon came to be in full discharge of their respective functions in Irving's congregation. Some of these were sent out through the country to help to enlighten benighted Christendom, and to call on the "faithful" to separate from Babylon, that is, from the "apostate churches." We can easily trace here the influences which were at work in the formation of Plymouthism. Irving looked on the University of London as "the synagogue of Satan." Some of the Irvingite prophets when "under the power," as it was called, would denounce the Church of England as Babylon. When not "under the power" they would speak in favor of this church. One Baxter, an Irvingite prophet, would denounce the Church of England when "under the power," whilst in his more sober moments, after being liberated from "the power," he would with his pen support this same church. The prophets themselves, when questioned, declared that they could not explain this strange phenomenon. But, of course, had they been able to explain it, it might not have been thought divine. Its very singularity and mystery would only have given additional zest and relish to the whole aspect of things as viewed by a number of the people of the time. No wonder if some people who unfortunately became enamoured of such a state of things, should come to look upon universities, which tended to make men's minds more sober and rational, as mere "synagogues of Satan." The pleasures and profits of delusion and fanaticism are endangered by such institutions as universities, and by such things as learning, theology, Confessions of faith, a trained ministry, etc., all of which were so hateful to the Irvingites, and are so distasteful also to the Brethren.

#### FALSE PREDICTIONS OF IRVINGITE PROPHETS.

On one occasion Irving, along with his apostles and prophets, were cruelly hoaxed by a pretended deputy from another congregation, alleged to be like their own, somewhere in the States. This deputy was received by Irving's whole college with open arms. A prophet announced it as a revelation from heaven, that a deputation should be appointed to visit their brother's congregation across the water. To cross "the herring pond" was then by no means so brief a trip as now. So the members of the deputation would have had abund-

ance of time to regale their spirits with the poetry of sky and ocean. But, alas, this would likely have been the best part of the trip. After arriving in "Uncle Sam's Land," and making diligent search, the deputation found that their brother's congregation could nowhere be located. So they had to retrace their steps, sadder, but it is to be feared, not any wiser men, for the strange infatuation still kept its hold.

The people were promised by Irving and his prophets, that if they would only separate from Babylon, there would be an abundant outpouring upon them of the Holy Spirit. Needless to say, the promise was never kept. To free themselves from the appearance of being promise breakers, the people who left the churches at the bidding of the prophets, were told to *believe* that the outpouring had actually taken place, even though they saw no signs of it. What, indeed, could be the use of faith unless it could look into the unseen? Does the Christian not live by faith and not by sight? The Brethren also make liberal promises of this kind to those who are willing to join them. But then, as with the Irvingites, the proof of the promises being kept is carefully stowed away into the region of faith. One cautious Brother writes as follows on the subject of "gifts" in the Plymouth form of the Church:—

"In answer to the objection, 'I do not see it, I do not *see* gift in the Church now,' one might remark, *that* is scarcely the ground of faith. It is better to question our own perception than the faithfulness of God."

Just so. You ought to believe that you cannot see, that you lack faith, rather than imagine that the Holy Spirit is not among the Brethren. It will next follow, as a matter of course, that whatever the Plymouth preacher tells you, comes directly from the Holy Spirit. This is the short and convenient cut the Brethren take to prove their doctrines right. In this way one could easily prove anything right. Thus ordinary Brethren are apt to be hoodwinked by their leaders. It is not the first time people imagined themselves free when they were in bondage. (John viii. 33.) This is how the Romish Church manages to keep her ordinary members in darkness and bondage. She induces them to take her unsupported word, and prevents them, if possible, thinking for themselves.

Irving was at length deposed from the Christian ministry of his church. But what could deposition by a branch of Babylon be to him but a real honor! He was soon re-ordained by one of his own apostles, at the bidding of one of his prophets, inspired professedly from heaven. These prophets could apparently obtain any kind of message they wanted from heaven, just as the Brethren interpreters seem able to bring anything they want out of the Bible. Neither Irving nor his college seemed to read aright the lesson which the deputation's trip across the Atlantic was calculated to teach.

Irving was by and by informed by one of his prophets that there came a message from heaven, directing him to repair to Scotland, for he had there to perform a mighty work of reformation. He, of

course, at once set out, but died very soon thereafter, and before the great work had been begun by him. Here again there was a flat contradiction of the prophet's oracle. But when once a people are wedded to fanatical notions, it would seem impossible to disillusionize them and sever the tie.

#### PRINCIPAL CUNNINGHAM ON IRVINGISM AND MONTANISM.

The peculiar conceptions of the Brethren regarding the manner in which the Holy Spirit "uses" their speakers at their meetings, have had a fair working trial among the Montanists and the Irvingites, as well as among other similarly minded people, and history exhibits the results. Both the Bible and Providence warn us against their shipwrecking rocks.

The late Dr. W. Cunningham, successor to the famous Dr. Chalmers as Principal of the Free Church College, Edinburgh, Scotland, and Professor of Church History in that college, has some instructive remarks in his "Historical Theology" (Vol. I., pp. 162, 163), comparing ancient Montanism with the extravagances about "gifts" which have just been noticed. Principal Cunningham writes as follows:—

"I do not recollect anything in the history of the Church so like Montanism in all its leading features, as one remarkable system which we have seen rise, decline, and in a great measure fall, in our day. . . . In both cases there was, along with a professed subjection to Scripture, and an attempt to defend themselves by its statements, a claim to supernatural and miraculous communications of the Spirit, and a large measure of practical reliance upon these pretended communications for the warrant and sanction of their notions and practices. In both there were the same perversions of the same passages of Scripture to countenance these pretensions. In both there was the same assumption of superior knowledge and piety, and the same compassionate contempt for those who did not embrace their views and join their party, and the same ferocious denunciation of men who actively opposed their pretensions as the enemies of God and the despisers of the Holy Ghost, and the same tone of predicting judgments on the community because it rejected their claims. . . . These modern exhibitions of fanatical folly and unwarranted pretensions to supernatural communications would have scarcely excited so much surprise, or produced so great a sensation, as they did in this country in recent times, if men had been better acquainted with the history of the Church, and with the previous exhibitions of a similar kind, especially if they had been familiar with the history of ancient Montanism."

Any one acquainted with the spirit and views of Plymouthism may easily discern in the foregoing description how applicable all the remarks made therein are to this system. The Brethren pervert the same passages of Scripture as did their precursors; they make special pretensions to the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and the predictions



of judgments rise to the lips of many of them with seeming spontaneity and relish, as if the wish were parent to the thought, when any one opposes their system, and seeks to point out its errors. How different this spirit which is always ready to pronounce judgments on opponents, from the spirit of our Lord, who prayed even for His crucifiers, and wept when He had to announce doom. There is often more of the spirit of Cain manifested by those who are ready to pronounce judgments than there is of the spirit of Christ.

#### IRVINGISM, MORMONISM, ROMANISM AND PLYMOUTHISM.

Reports of Irving's sayings and doings spread to other countries. It was when Irvingism was at its height in Britain, that Smith, the bankrupt farmer, latterly of Nauvoo, Illinois, the founder of Mormonism, pretended to have had conversations with angels, revelations from heaven, and certain spectacles miraculously given him wherewith to decipher some heavenly documents discovered by him. Notwithstanding the profligate and scandalous life of this man, yet he found multitudes to believe him. What will some people not believe! Thus was Mormonism founded, with its heterogeneous medley of prophets, apostles, heavenly revelations, mingled with lusts, homicides, and polygamy.

Romanism, Irvingism, Mormonism, and Plymouthism, appear to be closely related. They have each a different outward organization but a kindred spirit. The fact is that Plymouthism professes to have no organization at all. It is thus like a spirit without a body, whilst the other three religions are highly organized systems. But the spirit animating such systems may be quite akin, whilst the formal manner of expressing this spirit may be quite diverse among them. Plymouthism may be regarded as disembodied Irvingism, or Romanism. And it would not be very difficult to show that Romanism is an amalgamated system of heathenism and Christianity. The late Professor Duncan, Edinburgh, once said, "Puseyism a carcass, Plymouthism a ghost." He said so because the one wanted a soul, and the other wants a body.

Each of the four systems named claims for itself to be the only true church of Christ on earth. The pretensions of Romanism and Plymouthism in this direction are well known. Those of Mormonism are no less pronounced. The State of Utah, America, is the great home of Mormonism. The Presbyterians of this State quite recently drew up "Nine Reasons why Christians cannot fellowship the Mormon Church." These "Reasons" were endorsed by the Baptist and Congregational Associations of Utah (1897-1898). The first of the "Reasons" is as follows:—

"The Mormon Church un-churches all other Christians. It recognizes itself alone as the Church. From the beginning to the present time it has insisted, from press and platform, that all other Christian Churches, of whatever name, nation, or century, since apostolic times, are not only apostate from the truth, but propagators of error

and false doctrine, without authority to teach, preach or administer the sacraments ; that salvation and exaltation are found alone in the Church organized by Joseph Smith."

Could not the Brethren recognize part of their features in this mirror? For the words, "The Mormon," at the beginning of the paragraph, and for the words, "Joseph Smith" at the end, substitute the terms, "The Brethren," and we shall still have a true description in every respect.

Notwithstanding the kindred spirit animating the systems mentioned, there appears to be no love lost between them. Possibly this happens on the same principle as that which prevents selfish men loving each other. Each system fights and clamors for supremacy and exclusive privilege, which it cannot easily secure as long as there is another system, just like it, eagerly clamoring for the same things. The Brethren regard the Romish Church as "the mistress of harlots." All other denominations are, of course, the harlots themselves. Irvingites say about Mormonism that it is "only the devil's caricature" of themselves.

### III.

#### *HISTORICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PLYMOUTHISM.*

*(Continued.)*

#### ORIGINATING POINT OF PLYMOUTHISM.

ONE of the numerous meetings of Irving's time, fostered, no doubt, by Irvingism, and held for the purpose of studying the Scripture prophecies relating to the Second Coming of Christ, was that held in a private room in Dublin, Ireland. Prominent at this meeting was one Mr. A. N. Groves, once a dentist in Plymouth, England, and now studying for the Christian ministry. As frequently happens with those who begin to conduct religious meetings not under the auspices of their church, Groves soon came to differ from some of the doctrines of his church, and therefore could not sign his church's creed. Possibly he therefore conceived a dislike for all creeds. None hate creeds like those who want license for their views, whilst they at the same time wish to continue members of a religious body from whom they feel they differ in opinions on some fundamental points.

Groves' change of views seemed to stand in the way of his ever receiving ordination from his church. Then he began to think that ordination was not required for preaching the Gospel. Next he came to think that it was not required for dispensing the Lord's Supper. He soon persuaded his meeting to believe the same things. Then he began to dispense the Lord's Supper among the people of the meeting every Sabbath. This was the direct origin of the Brethren's weekly communion. But let it be particularly noted that neither Groves himself, nor any of the people of the meeting, had any intention whatever at this time of severing their connection with the churches to which they severally belonged. But once evil and the root of bitterness spring up connected with a church, it is often difficult, sometimes impossible, to eradicate them ere the many are defiled.

#### DARBY THE DIVIDER.

Groves soon left for the East. Shortly thereafter—that is, a little over sixty years ago—one Mr. J. N. Darby, a curate in the Irish Episcopal Church, and who had been attending the meetings already alluded to, quarrelled with his bishop because the latter would not admit of converted Romanists joining the Church unless they first took the oath of supremacy, swearing allegiance to the English sovereign. Darby at once severed his connection with his church, and began uttering terrible tirades in public against the system of

appointing clergymen to have jurisdiction over the religious interests of the people of any particular districts.

Up to the time of Darby's quarrel with his bishop, members of churches might communicate at the meetings already alluded to without severing their connection with their churches. But this liberty ceased after the quarrel. Darby soon remodelled his doctrines, and all for the worse. Groves was very sorry when he heard of the separation of members from their churches. If there had been no Darby there had been no Plymouthism. Plymouthism began in quarrelling and self-will, and these features have been prominent ones in the system ever since. The Brethren will not brook the rule even of the moral law itself, not to speak of their antipathy to church government. Darby went to Switzerland, and there broke up several Methodist congregations. "God," he said, "had not given him Germany"! He was four times in Canada. On his return from Switzerland he broke up the congregation of Brethren, ministered to by one Newton, in Plymouth, England, because it too much resembled the churches in organization, and also because he considered Newton unsound on the question of prophecy. A minority, however, still held by Newton, and came to be called the Neutral, or Open Brethren. Darby's followers came to be known as the Exclusives, or Close Brethren.

Darby next went through the country, excommunicating all the Brethren who sided with Newton. Here was the same man, Darby, who promptly quitted his church because he could not brook the will of another on a single point. How often does it happen that domineering men cannot tolerate any of the rule of another. After this there was continual quarrelling among the Exclusives, followed by rupture after rupture, until at the present time there are no less than five main divisions of Brethren, with ever so many subdivisions.

It ought to be noted that a considerable number of church members who were at first allured into the movement, afterward returned, sadder but wiser people, and none spoke harder words than they did of the new system. Mr. Newton was one of the number.

It may be also mentioned that the body came to be called the Plymouth Brethren, because, in reference to a certain matter, the Brethren in the town of Plymouth, England, ventured on a certain occasion to tender some advice to the Brethren in Ireland, and the latter replied in true Brethren style, "We will not be overruled by the Plymouth Brethren."

#### REFORMATION THE DUTY, NOT SEPARATION.

Now let a few things be noticed in connection with this movement of Darby and his coadjutors in having left their churches, and in endeavoring to get others also to leave. The sin of schism, or the rending of the body of Christ, is one of the very worst of which any one could be guilty in connection with the Church of Christ. There may be circumstances when a man may find it his duty to leave a

particular congregation, although this happens much more seldom than some would appear to think. But if a man think it his duty to leave a particular congregation, it generally is also his duty to do so quietly. But how often, alas! does a man leave merely because he cannot get to rule in matters where he wishes to rule; and, not content with leaving himself, he tries to do all the evil he can by seeking to sow seeds of bitterness, discontent, and faction, among the other members of the church or congregation.

Every movement of which we have any account, resulting eventually in separation from a church, and which appeared to have been attended with divine blessing, was characterized by earnest endeavors to have the church reformed ere it was decided that separation was necessary. Noah and Lot separated only by express divine command from a company about whose wickedness there could be no dubiety. They separated, moreover, only after protracted endeavors had been unsuccessfully made in each case to have the needful reform effected. Among the ancient Jews there were reformations in the times of Samuel, David, Solomon, Asa, Jehosaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. All these were effected by agencies within the commonwealth. Only once did separation take place within the Jewish commonwealth, and, as in the other cases mentioned, it occurred only by express divine ordering, and only after unsuccessful endeavors had been made to have the needful reforms effected.

Above all, let our Lord's treatment of the extremely corrupt Jewish Church of His time be noted. Corrupt as she was, He did not separate from her. On the contrary, He was usually present at her various religious festivals, attended her synagogues regularly, took part in the services, and ceased not his efforts at reforming this apostate church, until she herself came at length to witness against her terrible state, and to seal her own condemnation, by crucifying Him. And, marvellous to relate, even after all this, He directed that another effort still be made to reform the Church that had crucified Him, for He commanded that the gospel be first of all proclaimed at Jerusalem. Let the ceaseless efforts of our Lord, His tender appeals, His faithfulness, and His long-suffering towards what we may call His own church (John i. 11), be contrasted with the high-handed separation from their churches on the part of the originators of Plymouthism.

All the churches of which we read in the New Testament had corrupt members, especially the Church in Corinth and the churches in Asia (Rev. i., ii.). Yet there is not one word counselling separation from churches in all the New Testament. There are some dozen advices given to the churches in Asia, yet not a single word can be found among them for Christians to separate from any of them. But there are many distinct and emphatic warnings in the New Testament *against* separations, and also against those who make separations. The texts usually quoted by the Brethren by way of urging people to come out of the churches, are most unwarrantably and culpably applied. The Brethren's texts are only *pretexts*. In the

matter of separation from churches, as in much else, the Brethren would make the New Testament teach the exact opposite of what it actually does teach.

At the commencement of the Reformation, the reformers used all legitimate means in their power to have the Church of Rome reformed before it was decided that separation was necessary. Luther himself wrote letter after letter to the Pope, couched in the most respectful, and even affectionate, terms, setting forth the corrupt state of the Church, and pressing for the needful reforms. He, moreover, before separation, availed himself of every opportunity for discussion with those theologians of that church who were considered the most eminent. In fact, he ceased not his efforts at reforming the Romish Church until she herself at length excommunicated him, thus imitating his Lord's example.

The Free Church of Scotland had a "Ten Years' Conflict" *within* the Established Church, seeking reform, ere she decided that separation was necessary. And even after she did separate, she still adhered to the same Confession of Faith as she had had in the Church she had left; and she declared that although she "had quitted a vitiated Establishment," she was "still ready to return to a pure one." Darby's separation was, in every essential feature, at the very opposite pole from this one. He separated at once, on the very slightest provocation, and on a point also on which probably the majority would say he was wrong; he separated in a high-handed manner, sought to break up all the churches, and he set about recasting all his doctrines.

The two sections that ultimately united to form the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland also made endeavors to reform the Established Church ere they left it. They were, indeed, excommunicated, and Wesley and Whitefield had the doors of the English Church closed against them on account of their endeavors from within to effect what they believed to be a reform of that church.

If Darby and his coadjutors considered their churches to be wrong in their ecclesiastical polity, cold or corrupt in the life or doctrine of their members, their duty ought to have been plain. The best of churches are subject to errors of various kinds, and to periods of coldness and deadness. But it is just then that living members are needed most of all to work and pray within their pale. Many, however, would seek to have their fires burning only where there is already plenty of heat, and to hang up their lamps only where there is already an abundance of light. But let it be particularly noted, that it is by no means here assumed, either that the churches in question specially needed reform in Darby's day; or even if they did, that Darby or his coadjutors were suitable agents to effect that reform.

## IV.

### HISTORICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PLYMOUTHISM.

(Continued.)

#### PLYMOUTHISM *versus* THE CHURCHES OF THE REFORMATION.

EACH of the great branches of the Protestant Church regards the other branches as sister churches of Christ. Although there are differences between them as regards church government, and on comparatively minor points of doctrine, yet they do not regard each other as Babylon. Plymouthism can by no means take rank as one of the churches. It differs root and branch from them all, and it looks upon and treats them all as Babylon. The differences between, or the variety among, the churches mentioned, are far from resembling the chasm which separates Plymouthism from the churches, and that also which separates, in feeling at least, some sections of the Brethren themselves from other sections of them.

There is not much difference among the various sections of the Brethren as regards the doctrines and church principles which separate them all from the churches. But between themselves the Brethren differ strongly on such points as that already mentioned as having separated Darby from Newton. Divisions have occurred among them from one meeting receiving the excommunicated members of another, and from some sections holding open communion. There have been known to have been as many as five different meetings of Brethren in one district, and each meeting refusing to recognize any of the other meetings as composed of Christians. Yet the Brethren keep constantly ringing the changes on their pet sayings: "The one body and the one spirit," "Separation from evil is God's principle of unity," and "All sectarianism is sin."

#### WHY ARE THE BRETHREN NOT ROMAN CATHOLICS?

We might take every branch of the Protestant Church, one by one and show in the case of each the overwhelming strength of the probability that it is right as against Plymouthism. But to simplify procedure, let us take the Presbyterian Church alone as representing all others in this matter.

Let it be noted, then, in the first place, that the doctrines of every section of this church with regard to the Person and work of Christ, faith, repentance, regeneration, sanctification, sin, the Holy Spirit, the moral law, the method of salvation and the ultimate condition of the saints of the Old Dispensation, the Lord's day, the civil magistrate,

the Second Advent, church organization and government, creeds, ordination, office-bearers, an educated ministry, etc., are substantially the doctrines of the Reformation. But the Brethren differ radically from this church on every one of these fundamental doctrines and church principles. Why are the Brethren not Roman Catholics? As we shall presently see, Plymouthism resembles Romanism far more closely than it resembles the Protestant churches of to-day. All the signs of intelligence, and all the capacity for Scripture interpretation, that have yet appeared among the Brethren, would not warrant the belief, humanly speaking, that they themselves would have ever been able to deduce from Scripture the special doctrines of the Reformation. The Brethren profess to be thankful for the great work of the Reformation, and yet they do all they can to oppose and nullify its results.

### WAS THE REFORMATION A MISTAKE?

If Plymouthism is right, the reformers must have been all under strong delusion. All their persevering labors, their prevailing prayers, mighty faith, and great courage, and all the prayers made, both in public and private, by thousands upon thousands for the success of their great work, must have been far worse than in vain, for it was out of their great work that the doctrines and church principles of the present Protestant churches came to be formulated. If the Brethren are right, instead of the Reformation being, as Protestants usually suppose, a mighty, signal, and divine work, it was only an ill-advised, unseemly, misdirected, and sinful strife, grievous in its process and results to the Holy Spirit. When Luther declared that he could not get on without three hours of prayer daily, how mistaken he must have been, especially in supposing he got any answers to his prayers. The proof that he got no answers must be, according to the Brethren, that he set forth such doctrines in his efforts to interpret Scripture—doctrines that in all fundamental points are in entire disagreement with the doctrines of Plymouthism. How answerable, in the Brethren's view, must Luther and all the great reformers have been for their mischievous work, on which nothing but the present Babylon could have been erected, with all its paraphernalia of creeds, office-bearers, and detailed organization! The ringleaders of a wicked movement are usually punished more severely than their followers. So in the Brethren's view, Luther, Calvin, and John Knox, must now be where the Roman Catholics believe them to be. Romanists and Plymouthists must be at one here as in much else.

If the Brethren's views are right, the upshot of all the labors and prayers of the reformers was the leading of the people out of one Babylon merely for the purpose of conducting them into another, and forming them into veritable synagogues of Satan, which the Brethren have been specially ordained to pull down.



THE PLYMOUTH BRETHREN *versus* THE WESTMINSTER DIVINES.

About the middle of the seventeenth century, 150 of the most eminent, pious, learned, and gifted ministers and laymen who could be found in Great Britain and Ireland, were appointed to meet at Westminster, England, for prayer, consultation, and the study of God's Word. They continued to hold meetings day after day for about five years, having met about 1,163 times within this period. Richard Baxter says:—

"The divines there congregated were men of eminent learning, godliness, and ministerial ability. . . . So far as I am able to judge from the information of all history, the Christian world since the days of the apostles had never a synod of more excellent divines."

Many similar testimonies could also be given. Now the Standards of the Presbyterian Church, including her Confession of Faith and Catechisms, are the results of the protracted and prayerful deliberations of these divines, who had before them for study, not only the Word of God itself, but also all previously published standards of faith professedly deduced from it, including those of the Reformation period. Let it also be noted, that ever since the Presbyterian Standards were compiled, they have been accepted with substantial unanimity by every generation of Presbyterians throughout the world, as accurately setting forth the teaching of God's Word on all the subjects embraced in them. And, besides, the greatest Protestant theologians in Christendom, and the most eminent scholars who have studied the Scriptures, are practically unanimous in the opinion, that if the Bible, *as it stands*, is to be accepted as the Word of God, no essential change can ever be made in any one of the great body of reformed doctrines, as these are set forth in the Westminster Standards.

## THE PROBABILITIES BALANCED.

Is there a probability of one to a million, or to many millions, that all the eminent, talented, pious, and learned students of the Bible in all ages since the days of the apostles, including the reformers and Westminster divines, were wrong—not wrong, be it observed, on mere minor details, but radically wrong on all the cardinal doctrines of God's Word, and that the individual man Darby got a flood of light from the Holy Spirit as soon as he quarrelled with his bishop? As already noticed, had there been no Darby there probably had been no Plymouth Brethren. It is very remarkable, moreover, that the doctrines professed to have been discovered by this man, were, and are still, considered by the Brethren to be so plainly set forth in Scripture, that they seem to marvel that the very simplest of the people do not see them to be so. The great Dr. Chalmers must have been entirely deluded on what the most illiterate Brother can explain in a moment, and will wonder why the humblest member in Babylon cannot see the point.

What perverted judgments the reformers must have had, and the Westminster divines, and students of the Bible in every age since the apostolic period down to the times of Darby's quarrel with his bishop! How blind must have been all Bible interpreters ever since, the Plymouth Brethren ones alone excepted! Who or what could have bewitched them all? The solution of the mystery will not seem so difficult when it is known that every moderately well-informed student of church history, both in Darby's time and ever since, could easily have recognized every tenet of Darbyism, with the exception of its strange doctrine of perfection, as merely an old and exploded heresy, resurrected and dressed up, and sought to be palmed off on the unthinking and uninformed part of the public as the revelations of a specially spiritually-minded people. The Plymouth doctrine of perfection, which teaches that one can be holy with the holiness of another, was too ridiculous even for the heretics of any previous age until the rise of the Brethren.

If a dozen long columns of figures were to be given to 150 chartered accountants—we should say rather to many thousands of such accountants in each of twoscore generations—to sum up, and all these skilled men obtained the very same results; and afterwards some nondescript came along and added up the same dozen columns, and found a result for each column totally different from the results obtained by all the skilled accountants, what person in possession of ordinary sanity of mind would be likely to imagine that the nondescript was probably right, and all the trained and skilled counters wrong—wrong in every column? But let it be further supposed that the stranger explained to the skilled accountants, or that they themselves observed, his methods of counting, and that they at once perceived that his mistakes were such as men ignorant of counting often commit, as, for instance, placing units under tens, and tens under hundreds, then the absolute certainty of the self-confident man being inexcusably wrong, would be at once apparent even to very tyros in counting. So the snares into which the Brethren have fallen in their attempts at Scripture interpretation for the enlightenment of the public, are snares that are well known to every moderately well-equipped Bible interpreter. The Brethren ought to be thankful if they should come to understand as much of the Bible as will be effective in their own salvation individually, which it is doubtful that they do understand, unless they are much better than their creed, and should refrain from seeking to interpret the Word of God for the public benefit until they are better fitted for the important work.

If we could suppose the Brethren to be right, then all the praise and thanks ever ascribed to God for the work of the great reformers, and for that of the Westminster divines, and for all the conversions of sinners, and the revivals of religion in the churches founded, fostered, or perpetuated by these reformers or divines, were only such abominations in the divine ear as were the services and offerings of old in the divine sight, when He declared that His soul hated them. (Isaiah i). But if, in the Brethren's view, the work of the reformers, and that of the other divines mentioned, did really receive the divine

blessing, then it must, one should think, be a perplexing riddle to them, if any religious question can possibly be so to *them*, that this blessing should have been accorded to the reformers, since a very great part of their work was carried on by means of those things which the Brethren call "man-made creeds." More especially must it be an insoluble mystery to the Brethren, that the Westminster divines should have obtained the divine blessing on their labors, since the very object of all their protracted and prayerful work was none other than the compilation of a creed.

And if the reformers secured and enjoyed the divine blessing on their work, how is it that the churches founded on the very basis laid down from Scripture by these reformers could be regarded as Babylon? The doctrines of the reformed faith are still the doctrines of the modern Protestant churches. There have been conversions in all the modern churches. And our Lord intimated that no man who could work a miracle in His name could lightly speak evil of Him, and ought, therefore, to be regarded as on His side. Paul appealed to the Corinthian Christians as being a seal of his apostleship. He desired Timothy to make full proof of his ministry, which implied his seeking the same kind of seal as Paul himself had enjoyed of having the divine blessing on his work. The Brethren watch for the converts of the churches, in which circumstance it is implied that they believe the modern churches are the means under God of making converts. How, then, can the Brethren regard these churches as they do? Probably as the Pharisees regarded our Lord when they questioned the man whose eyes had been opened. "How opened he thine eyes?" queried they. And when they heard, they "said unto him, Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." So would the Brethren seem to say to the church converts: Give glory to God. we know that the men who have been the means of converting you are sinners in doomed Babylon. (John ix.)

At the present day, the light which, as the Brethren must think, was hid from the reformers, the Westminster divines, and from all Bible readers and students in every post-apostolic generation until the day of Darby's quarrel with his bishop, and hid from all ever since, the Brethren alone excepted, can professedly be made as plain as A, B, C, by any one of the humblest of tract writers or preachers belonging to the Brethren. The Westminster divines, and the reformers before them, might toil on, agonizing in prayer for spiritual guidance, and for the help of the promised Spirit, of truth, and might labor all their lives in the study of God's Word, and in the case of the Westminster divines might do so unitedly for five long years, and after all, remain entirely in the dark on what an itinerant Brother can make plain on the spur of the moment, at a chance meeting, and with positively no previous preparation.

What reply can we suppose the Brethren would be likely to make regarding all this weight of presumptive evidence against them? Possibly they would aver that they alone are Spirit-guided. We shall consider this reply presently, when we come to treat of the Brethren's lack of credentials.

## HISTORICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PLYMOUTHISM.

(Continued.)

### PLYMOUTHISM IS WITHOUT A CREED.

THE Brethren are said to glory in the fact of their having no formal creed. They object to creeds just as they do to a "man-made ministry." They often also sneer at what they call "human theology."

It may sound very "catchy" in the ears of some to hear it said: "We have no creed but the Bible." This cry would seem to indicate that in the opinion of those whose cry it is, the religious bodies that have formal creeds put mere human compositions in place of the Bible. This is a very short-sighted view. A creed, or Confession of Faith, is simply the doctrines and church principles set forth in an orderly manner that those, whose creed or Confession it is, believe to be contained in Scripture. We cannot give our religious views at all without giving as much of our creed as we give of our views, unless, indeed, we give a reason for the hope that is in us, and confess the Lord Jesus with the mouth, by merely quoting verses of Scripture. We could never speak nor write on religious subjects without giving our creed. Even when a man opposes all creeds, in the very words in which he does this he is giving his creed. And if our religious beliefs as to the general tenor of Scripture teaching are to be given at all, it is surely better to do this in an orderly manner, each subject under its suitable heading, rather than treat of these subjects confusedly. A man writing on farming would surely better write in proper and intelligent order, rather than write, say, one sentence on raising oats, the next on feeding cattle, and the following one on breeding poultry, etc. But when we thus set forth our religious beliefs in an orderly manner, we are just setting forth our creed, or Confession of Faith.

### THE SERVICEABLENESS OF CREEDS.

The Brethren do not seem to be aware of the great service which has been rendered to the Church of Christ in every age of it by the publications of creeds or Confessions of Faith. In the early part of our era certain heathen philosophers sought to capture Christianity for the support and service of their philosophies. Thus many who had embraced the Christian faith were placed in eminent jeopardy. It happened also, at the same time, that enemies of Christianity were

constantly misrepresenting Christians as the foes of their country, and as meeting together to plot against their country's government. Moreover, it often happened that persons of scandalous lives assumed the name of Christians, in order to enjoy the credit that was accorded the latter by right-thinking people. Such assumptions could be made by false professors, and thus much discredit brought on Christianity, as long as it was not known what were the precise beliefs of Christians. Romanists sought to stop the work of the Reformation by tactics similar to those followed by the early enemies of Christianity. The reformers were misrepresented as to their views and motives. The publication of the Confessions of the Christians' true faith was the obvious, and under God, the effective, remedy for these various evils. Protestant creeds were amongst the most mighty weapons honored by God in fighting the battles of the Reformation. Those, therefore, who call themselves Protestants, and who despise Confessions of Faith, prove themselves to be neither very enlightened, nor very grateful, in connection with one of the most signal means by which their precious heritage was won.

In the early ages of Christianity, the Church used to meet heresies originating within her own pale, by publishing, after much deliberation and discussion on the points at issue, their Confessions of Faith on these points. In this way many precious truths about Christ's natures, His will, and His work, as well as truths about the Holy Spirit, truths also about man's guilt, depravity, inability, and kindred subjects, were elicited from Scripture, and handed down to us as a precious heritage. God thus seemed to use certain junctures in His providence for the purpose of calling attention to the expediency—the necessity, we should rather say—of having certain truths clearly defined by the Church, and set forth in a systematic manner, not possible to be mistaken. If we are to judge from any intelligence, and any competency for Scripture interpretation, that have yet appeared among the Brethren, we may feel sure they could never have discovered these truths for themselves. They are indebted for whatever they may possess of them to the labors, prayers, learning, piety, and Confessions of Faith, of men who were members of the churches that the Brethren call Babylon. The great majority of these men were "man-made" ministers, and every one of them countenanced the "one-man" ministry, and everything else which, in the eyes of the Brethren, is so sinful and grievous in doomed Babylon. It is a pity the Brethren could not appear for a little space before the public deprived of every good thing they have received from sources which they condemn as sinful and doomed. The spectacle would be instructive. Whatever amount of truth the Brethren's creed may possess, they owe not to themselves, but to the churches, the creeds, learning, and men, that they despise. If the Brethren live under the blessings of a wise legislation, and of a Christian tone in the countries they inhabit, they owe these blessings also to the churches, the Christian ministry in these churches, and to the legislatures they despise. The Brethren do what they can to staunch the precious fountains

whence their blessings flow. What intelligence ! What consistency ! What gratitude, and what usefulness to society, on the part of the persons who pose in our midst as the only true teachers of our civilizing, enlightening, gratitude-inspiring, elevating, saving, Christian religion !

A properly drawn-up Confession of Faith, exhibiting the sense in which a body of people professing the Christian religion understands the general tenor of the teaching of God's Word, is requisite by that body for its religious freedom, and for its protection from imposition by heretical preachers—preachers of the kind belonging professedly even to the body itself. A preacher belonging professedly to a certain religious body might hold *in retentis*, either consciously and clandestinely, or else unconsciously, several beliefs entirely at variance with those of the body to which he professedly belongs. Presumably if the members of that body knew that he entertained such beliefs, whether he preached them or not, they would not go to hear him. But unless he, in some suitable manner, expresses his adherence to a properly drawn-up confession of this religious body's faith, before he is allowed to preach with the sanction of the body, none of them can tell how many serious errors he may hold. He might preach these errors for a considerable time without detection. And even should he not teach them in public, he might do so in private, and with all the weight and influence which recognition as a preacher belonging to the body might give him. If he should one day in public give an address containing serious errors, even this one address might do irreparable damage. Along with other evils, it might be the means of splitting up the congregation. All the more likely would it do so, if the preacher had been for some time laboring acceptably in the district. Still more likely would the split occur, if he had been privately teaching his heresies before proclaiming them in public. Times innumerable have divisions occurred among the Brethren themselves from this very cause, until the main body has been literally shivered into countless fragments.

#### THE WORST HERETICS HAVE SAID THE BIBLE WAS THEIR CREED ?

The Brethren say that their creed is the Bible. A Unitarian will agree to every word in the New Testament about Christ, and yet he believes our Lord to have been nothing more than a mere man. Socinians, Romanists, Arminians, and all the modern churches whom the Brethren think to be Babylon, profess to take their doctrines from the Bible. How do the Brethren feel so sure that they form the proper views of Scripture teaching, and that all the modern churches go so far astray in their endeavor to do the same thing ? Some of the greatest heretics that ever lived sought to defend their opinions by quoting the very words of Scripture. Satan himself loves to quote Scripture in his own way, and for his own ends. The Jews that crucified our Lord professed to have Scripture on their side in their terrible deed. What evidence do we give as to our religious views by merely saying that our creed is the Bible ?

The Brethren imagine they enjoy a freedom that the religious bodies that have creeds do not possess. In this, however, they are much mistaken. There is no body of people so apt to be imposed upon, hoodwinked, priest-ridden, as the body that has no creed. In the Brethren's case the probability of imposition is immensely increased, since they profess to believe that their speakers are Spirit-guided. If this statement be a problem for the Brethren, they ought to try to solve it, and do a little honest thinking.

How is the public supposed to know that the meetings of the Brethren are not veritable traps, composed of those "who lie in wait to deceive"? It is not a sufficient guarantee that the Brethren themselves say, "we are all honest people." Highwaymen, and robbers of the purse, as well as "robbers of the churches," will all say they are honest men. When a body of people virtually says to the public, "We do not tell you beforehand all the opinions we entertain about the cardinal doctrines of the Bible, but if you come to our meetings, and put yourselves under our teaching, we can guide you aright, and no other religious body can do so," the body saying so presumes not a little on the gullibility of certain sections of the public. Any such statements, either expressly made, or else plainly implied in what is asserted or done, are presumptuous and offensive in manner, suspicious in motive, and unjustifiable in morals.

The Brethren make constant complaints about being misunderstood and misrepresented. The churches which have creeds have no such complaints to make. Does this latter fact never strike the Brethren as wonderful? Why don't the Brethren occupy the time in compiling their creed from the Bible which is spent by them in continuous crying and wailing about their being misunderstood and misrepresented? Of course, if the Brethren make capital out of their complaints, they will be unwilling that this source of profit should be cut off.

The Brethren are uninstructed enough to imagine that the religious bodies that have creeds put these creeds in place of the Bible, and that somehow these creeds are intended to be forced on the acceptance of other people. Do the Brethren themselves put their books in place of the Bible, or do they force the opinions in these books on other people? It suits them evidently to misrepresent the churches. Do the Brethren never think that all the books of their own authors are nothing more nor less than creeds?

#### PLYMOUTH ATTITUDE TO THEOLOGY.

Brethren writers constantly sneer at theology, as they do at creeds, and yet they themselves have a theology just in the same sense as they have a creed. They speak slightingly of theological systems made by man, as if their own were made by angels. Generally speaking, a theology is just a creed, with the reasons added to show why it is the creed of the compiler. Is there anything wrong in this? The Brethren profess to approve of comparing Scripture

with Scripture, but they would seem to object to the results of such comparisons being set down on paper for the benefit of others. And, moreover, what they thus complain of, they themselves do. What intelligence and consistency!

If any part of a theology does not represent properly the teaching of Scripture, the proper way to deal with this is to put what is wrong right, and not rail at all theology. Theology is just the system of ascertaining, and the orderly arrangement of, the truths given us in Scripture by the God of Scripture, just as other sciences are the systems of ascertaining, and the orderly arrangements of, truths given us in nature by nature's God. If it be asked why God has not arranged the truths of the Bible for us, and, if He has not done so, ought we not to be contented without any arrangements of these? we may reply by asking why has He not built our houses, bridges, and fences, for us, and labelled the bottles in the chemist's store? And if He has not done these things for us, ought we not to be content to do without them? Why did not God himself keep and dress the garden of Eden? Why has He given man anything at all to do, since He could have done everything for him? Do the Brethren go to nature, to flowers and plants, for their medicine, where the Creator first placed it, instead of their going to the chemist's store where medicines have been placed and arranged according to the science of chemistry?

God has given man the materials, and intended that for his physical, mental, moral, and spiritual benefit he should work at them, arrange them, and use them. He has done precisely similar with the truths of the Bible, and for similar reasons. But the enlightened Plymouth Brethren would seem to aim at thwarting this beneficent intention of Providence.

The Brethren's dislike to creeds and theology, however, may show something worse than mere want of knowledge. It may be the outcome of sheer hatred to light. Some people do not like to be brought face to face with naked truth, because both their errors and their duties would then be made too manifest. They prefer the truth to be in a haze, so that they may feel more at liberty to form and teach whatever opinions they like about it, without their errors being so liable to detection. A man ignorant of chemistry might object to and dispute many of the most precious truths of the science, as long as the materials, and the truths connected with them, lay scattered about in nature where Providence originally placed them. But let the necessary materials be collected, arranged, and experimented on, and if the ignorant disputer have as much sense as will enable him to see the results, he will be confounded. But should he anticipate that by such a process some pet theory of his might be exposed, and proved false, and thus his honor, and perhaps his bread, be at stake, unless he be an honest man he will likely object strongly to the whole science of chemistry. He will urge that we should go to nature itself for our truths. He will so urge merely because he wishes himself to go there, where they are hid, and bring them out,



by any method, and with any results, pleasing to him. He would wish that people would forget that it is to nature that chemistry does actually go for her truths. But she goes there with system, order, and intelligence, not with mere emotions and preconceptions, and she goes there with a knowledge of previous results obtained by workers in the same field. And if the objector be ignorant of all these things, and too lazy to labor to understand them, he will, of course, go on still to *object*. The world is full of objectors of this class. Better to object, they think, than lose both their craft and their credit. Every quack doctor loves to run down the properly qualified medical man.

The Brethren would no doubt find themselves hampered in seeking to carry out what they imagine to be their special mission did they publish their creed. The Jesuits hate creeds, and so do all proselytizing bodies. The Romish Church resisted the publication of her creed as long as she could. It was the necessity she felt of keeping pace with the reformers that induced her to publish her creed. Those who commit the evil of lying in wait for the members of other churches hate the light of creeds, just as other evil-doers hate everything which will cast light upon their deeds. Little do some of the Brethren know how their system has been trimmed up in the course of years, both to hide its defects from themselves, and to hide clandestine policy. Plymouthism is in this also, as in much else, like Romanism.

## VI.

### HISTORICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PLYMOUTHISM.

(Continued.)

#### PLYMOUTHISM IS WITHOUT CREDENTIALS.

SINCE the Plymouth Brethren came forward professing, both implicitly and explicitly, to be as a body the only true teachers of the Christian religion since the days of the apostles, and also offering to show to members of modern churches that they have all along been under the most serious delusion with regard to their religious views, surely the public, and especially church members, are entitled to demand at the very outset from these Brethren, and possibly *might* demand did they think it worth while, the most ample and satisfactory credentials to establish the genuineness of their profession, and the *bona fides* of their offer. As a general rule, individuals are not appointed to offices, either public or private, without credentials of some satisfactory sort. If General Roberts had come forward, comparatively unknown, and without credentials, and offered his services as commander of the British forces in South Africa, his doing so would, no doubt, and rightly so, be regarded as complete evidence of his unfitness. This would be still more the case, if the office for which he offered himself were that of an ambassador to a foreign nation. The important and delicate duties of such an office require an intelligence, a proper impressibility of mind and heart, a true moral sensibility, a capacity for readily perceiving the fitness of things, a special and approved previous qualifying experience, and all such qualifications would require to be well accredited in the one warrantably appointed to an office of the kind. Any one, therefore, coming forward without credentials of any sort to offer his services for such an office, would show very clearly by his action, not only that he was at the time totally unfit to be thought of in such a connection, but also that he was exceedingly unlikely ever to become fit, however diligently he might seek to qualify himself.

But the duties of a preacher of the Gospel, especially if we include therein the duty of interpreting the Word of God correctly, are far more important, and much further reaching in their results, than the duties of either an ambassador or an army commander. Moreover, the office of a preacher of the Gospel has far more scope for the exercise and utilization of even such qualifications as have been already named, as well as of other qualifications of a still higher kind, than has any of the other offices mentioned. This ought to be

regarded by the Brethren themselves as specially true, for there is no office among men, as the Brethren themselves will surely concede, the duties of which have not been successfully discharged by thousands upon thousands of individuals since apostolic times. But in the Brethren's view, no body of people, as a rule, were able to interpret the Bible correctly, ever since the days of the apostles until the rise of the Brethren, some sixty years ago. None of the modern churches, if the Brethren's view of them be correct, notwithstanding all the piety, talent, and learning, usually thought to be among them, have been able to attain to any better results in Bible interpretation, and in preaching what they think to be the Gospel, than to prepare their members for the doom of Babylon. The profession and offer made by the Brethren, therefore, involve the most astounding assumptions, and ought to be supported by the clearest and most unquestionable evidence to show that these assumptions are warrantable. And all the more is this the case, since the presumptive evidence is so strongly against the Brethren being right in this profession and offer.

The genuineness and validity of a profession a man might make of having discovered some new and important truth in physical science could be put to the test of experiment as soon as the profession was made. It is different, however, with regard to a profession of ability to teach the public important truths in connection with the Christian religion. This latter subject has to do to a large extent with the physically unseen, and is, therefore, not so capable of having its truths verified by physical processes. And this is probably to a considerable extent the reason why there is no other subject whatever in connection with which there have been, from the very first, so many false teachers, so many impostors, "deceitful workers," self-deluded individuals, and fanatics of every description, as there have been in connection with this subject. Therefore, credentials, in the circumstances described, are all the more necessary, and the Brethren ought to be sensible of the fact. A man is not considered qualified even to treat the body medically unless he have satisfactory credentials of some kind. Unless he have such credentials, how could it be known whether his treatment might not more readily kill than cure? And the treatment of the soul is much more important than even that of the body. Although Moses was assured that his mission to Israel was a divine one, yet he felt his need of credentials, and this feeling was divinely honored. Even our Lord himself acknowledged the propriety of the demand for credentials, and He also submitted His own credentials. He likewise expressed His adherence to the rule that if a man bore witness of himself (*i.e.*, if he *alone* should do so), his witness was not true. But the Brethren have no other witness of themselves than their own. The apostles were accredited by our Lord himself, and also by the miracles they wrought. What exquisite sensibilities the apostle Paul had as to what was due the public in the matter of credentials. The Brethren seem utterly oblivious to all such considerations. How could they

intelligently read through the Word of God, since it contains so much that requires quickened moral and spiritual sensibilities to apprehend properly? And above all, how could they reasonably profess to have such pre-eminent spiritual sensibilities as that they perceive clearly that the interpretations put by the modern churches upon the very fundamental doctrines of the Bible are only "Satan's imitations" of the true? Let any reasonable, thinking, person ask himself the question, What probability is there that the light which the Brethren imagine to be in them be not darkness?

#### DECEIVERS ARE SOMETIMES DIVINELY PERMITTED.

It ought not to be forgotten in this connection, that we have reason to believe that many deceivers—many false spirits—are permitted to go out into the world for the purpose of testing professing people. See, for instance, Deuteronomy xiii. 1-5; 1 Corinthians xi. 19; 2 Thessalonians ii. 6-12; Revelation xx. 7, 8. Those who are not faithful in the performance of their duties, nor careful to have their minds and hearts established in correct Scripture knowledge, may be tempted successfully to give ear to seducing spirits, and thus come under strong delusion. They may thus believe many lies, just as the cholera plague often infects those who are debauched or loose in their habits, or filthy in their surroundings. Now, were the Brethren capable of realizing the importance of such facts, we might expect that they would be more careful to furnish the public with satisfactory credentials of their honesty and competency.

The apparent insensibility of the Brethren to their lack of credentials does not argue well for them in more ways than one. True moral sensibility is prominent in a sanctified character. And if, as the Brethren themselves profess, they are as fit now for the society of heaven as they can ever be made, we might naturally expect them to manifest something like mature moral sensibilities, and other signs of a completed moral character, in their dealings with their fellow-creatures here on earth.

#### WHAT IS THE PLYMOUTH PROBABLE 'TACIT ASSUMPTION AS TO CREDENTIALS?

But if the Brethren present no formal credentials, what can we suppose to be their tacit assumptions as to why the public ought to listen to them. Do they wish it to be understood that they or their teachers are in the line of apostolic succession? that they had visions and revelations from the Lord, that they have better intellects than all those that differ from them; that they lead more moral lives than any other professing people, or what else can they suppose to be a valid reason why they, and they alone, should be listened to as having the truth on their side?

Apparently the only real ground for the Brethren's assumption of being possessed of superior qualifications for Scripture interpretation

is to be found in their belief that they alone are the only Spirit-guided people on earth. But this groundless assumption only makes their position all the more ridiculous. Did they merely profess that their Scripture interpretations seemed to them more consistent with reason, and with sound methods and principles of interpretation, we might respect their attitude even whilst we disagreed with their conclusions. But when is added to the fact of their interpretations being in the main glaringly false, prejudiced and puerile, the circumstance that they profess to have been guided to these interpretations by the Holy Spirit, there is the strongest probability suggested that they speak a vision of their own hearts, and say, "Thus saith the Lord," albeit the Lord hath not spoken to them. Are the Brethren ever afraid they may be found in the category of such deluded individuals?

Of course, if the Spirit guides the Brethren to their views, it must be plain that He cannot guide those in their views who hold doctrines entirely opposed to Brethren doctrines. And what credentials do the Brethren present that the Spirit guides *them*, and not those opposed in view to them? There is in this case all the more need of credentials, since the Brethren make this profession of exclusive Spirit guidance, and since this profession is of a kind that cannot be submitted to ordinary methods of proof. This is probably the reason, as already observed, why many present a credential of this sort: it cannot be read by certain sections of the public. If the Brethren were asked how the public is to know whether they are Spirit-guided or not, they would probably reply that this could be known from the doctrines they preach. But how can we even know what doctrines they preach without going to their meetings? for they publish no creed, nor do they even announce to what body they belong when they write books. But, again, were it asked the Brethren, How can we be sure that your doctrines are right if we belong to Babylon, and lack spirituality of mind to decide? the Brethren would probably reply, either in an implicit or an explicit way: We have the Holy Spirit, therefore believe us. Thus they would reason in a circle, which kind of a reasoning may do well enough for those who cannot think for themselves. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit, there is more hope of the fool than of him." "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight." (Proverbs xxvi.; Isaiah v.)

#### FANATICS USUALLY PROFESS SPIRIT GUIDANCE.

The most deluded fanatics that ever lived made professions of divine guidance. Emanuel Swedenberg professed to have conversed with Jesus face to face, and also with angels in their own habitations. He announced that he had thus obtained methods of Scripture interpretation communicated to no one else. How we do love to be special favorites! Are we prepared to believe him? He had all the kind of argument on his side that the Brethren have on theirs, and also

could advance it far more intelligently than they can. Do the Brethren believe in Irving's prophets, in Smith the founder of Mormonism, and in modern Christian Scientists? If not, what is the reason? They all professed to be under divine guidance as well as the Brethren. Johanna Southcote of England, who died in 1814, believed herself to be the bride of the Lamb, or the woman clothed with the sun. (Revelation xii.) She was, moreover, expected to give birth to the Messiah. How she could do so and be at the same time His bride, was probably not explained. Possibly she also, and her followers, thought it would be profane to employ reason in connection with sacred subjects. The Jumpers and the Shakers feel sure of being under the influence of the Holy Spirit in the performance of the religious exercises which their names indicate.

#### JONATHAN EDWARDS ON RELIGIOUS FANATICS.

The following sentences from Jonathan Edwards have a very direct bearing on the point before us, and ought to be pondered, especially by the Brethren. He is writing of those who fancy they have inspirations, illuminations, and whisperings, from the Holy Spirit, but whose imaginations have deceived them. They vainly imagine they have made discoveries of God's special love to themselves. Jonathan Edwards writes as follows:—

“And a very great part of the false religion that has been in the world from one age to another, consists in such discoveries as these, and in the affections that flow from them. In such things consisted the experience of the ancient Pythagoreans and many others among the heathen, who had strange ecstasies and raptures, and pretended to a divine afflatus and immediate revelations from heaven. In such things seem to have consisted the experiences of the Essenes, an ancient sect among the Jews, at and after the times of the apostles. In such things consisted the experiences of many of the ancient Gnostics, and the Montanists, and other sects of ancient heretics, in the primitive ages of the Christian Church. And in such things consisted the pretended immediate converse with God and Christ, and saints and angels, of the Monks, Anchorites, and Recluses, that formerly abounded in the Church of Rome. In such things consisted the pretended high experiences and great spirituality of many sects of enthusiasts that swarmed in the world after the Reformation, such as Anabaptists, Antinomians and Familists, the followers of N. Stork, Th. Muncer, Jo. Becond, Henry Pfesier, David George, Casper Swenckfield, Henry Nicholas, Johannes Agricola Eislebius, and the many wild enthusiasts that were in England in the days of Oliver Cromwell; and the followers of Mrs. Hutcheson in New England; as appears by the particular accounts given of these sects by that eminently holy man, Mr. Samuel Rutherford, in his ‘Display of the Spiritual Antichrist.’ And in such things as these consisted the experiences of the late French prophets and their followers. And in these things seem to lie the religion of many kinds of enthusiasts of

the present day. It is chiefly by such sort of religion as this that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and it is that which he has ever most successfully made use of to confound hopeful and happy revivals of religion from the beginning of the Christian Church to the present day. When the Spirit of God is poured out to begin a glorious work, then the old serpent, as fast as possible, and by every means, introduces this bastard religion and mingles it with the true, which has soon brought all things into confusion. The pernicious consequence of it is not easily imagined until we see and are amazed with its awful effects, and the dismal desolations it has made. If the revival of true religion be very great in its beginning, yet if this bastard comes in, there is danger of its doing as Gideon's bastard, Abimelech, did, who never left until he had slain his threescore and ten true-born sons, excepting one that was forced to fly. Great and strict, therefore should be the watchfulness and guard that ministers maintain against such things, especially at a time of great awakening."\*

These are solemn words. There has been probably no one, ever since the days of the apostles, who was so well fitted, both by gifts and circumstances, to form a correct opinion of those very matters on which he here writes, as was Jonathan Edwards.

Let what Principal Edwards says about the enemy watching particularly at times of awakening be noted. It seems to have been his experience that at such times especially the enemy sought to sow tares, and produce what he calls a "bastard" religion. It is well known that it is just at times of awakening in the churches that the Plymouth Brethren specially "lie in wait" to prosecute their particular mission.

#### ATTITUDE OF FANATICS *versus* THAT OF MODERN CHURCHES.

All those of whom J. Edwards tells us, professed to take the Bible as their guide, and they all apparently expected to be believed for no other reason than that they themselves asserted that they were Spirit-guided. Would the Brethren accept of their profession and protestations on this point, and credit anything that any of these people would tell them, on the ground of their being what they professed to be? And if not, why not? The Brethren would no doubt answer: We would judge of them by the opinions they held, apart from the profession they made of being guided by the Spirit; and we would also judge of them by their conduct; and, further, if we found that their feelings were wrought up so as to suggest fanaticism, we could not believe otherwise about them than that they were deluded in imagining themselves to be under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit. And will the Brethren not permit other people to judge of themselves just by the same standards? If they will do so, then they will, we hope, see the inconsistency of themselves, not merely professing in words, but assuming in conduct, that they ought to be

\* Edwards' "Religious Affections," pp. 308-370.

believed in their profession of having the Holy Spirit guiding them. Let their opinions be first proved, without assuming anything about the Holy Spirit in the process of proof. But unfortunately the Brethren seem unable to submit their views to proof, without the expressed or tacit assumption on their part, that if these opinions are not seen to be right, it is because the Holy Spirit does not guide and enlighten those who examine them.

We have the Holy Spirit, therefore believe us, is the position usually taken by fanatics. The modern churches virtually say: Here are our opinions, set forth in our Standards, about the general tenor of the teaching of God's Word. We invite you to examine our Standards in the light of Scripture, and to examine also the profession and lives of our members. If you should be of opinion that these are all scriptural, you will also probably be of opinion that we have a claim to be regarded as being of the Church of Christ, and that the promise of the Holy Spirit is made good to us. Surely this is a very different position from that in which it is virtually or even expressly said: We have the Holy Spirit, therefore believe us. If the Bible were a secular book, would it be at all likely that the pre-eminence of the Brethren's intelligence would warrant them in assuming that all modern students and interpreters thereof who differed from them were wrong? Not likely. Why, then, are the Brethren not just as modest about their claims to be able to understand the Bible better than the modern churches, as they would be compelled to be, for fear of exposure and humiliation, if the Bible were a secular book? Is not the reason probable, that there is a tacit assumption on the Brethren's part of exclusive Spirit guidance?

#### PLYMOUTH CLAIM OF CREDENTIALS FROM MESSRS. SPURGEON AND MOODY.

Sometimes the Brethren refer to some well-known men who, they allege, have expressed approval of some Brethren publications. Were any others than the Brethren to offer such credentials to show that their doctrines are scriptural, we know what the Brethren would say. It is usual for the Brethren to refer to the late Messrs. Moody and Spurgeon as having expressed approval of the Notes on the early books of the Bible by Mr. Mackintosh, who appears to be one of the chief modern Plymouth writers, and to whom we shall afterwards refer. But it is quite certain that neither Mr. Moody nor Mr. Spurgeon held any of the special doctrines of Plymouthism. Did either of them think the modern churches to be Babylon? Here is part of the late Professor Drummond's testimony regarding some of Mr. Moody's views:—

“Mr. Moody was no schismatic. Just because he was so practical he was loyal to the churches. Hardly educated himself, he emphasized the education of the ministry.”

These views of Mr. Moody are directly opposed to those of the Brethren. The Brethren look on the late Professor Drummond as



the embodiment of all that was heretical in sinful Babylon, whilst he was Mr. Moody's right-hand man in every work in which he could get the professor to join him. Mr. Moody said of him that he was the purest man he had ever met, and often felt rebuked in his presence.

Take the following quotation from Drummond's Life :—

"In the first week of December, 1874, at an all-day meeting in Dublin, Ireland, attended by 15,000 people, including 1,000 clergymen, Mr. Moody spoke on 'sectarianism' as follows: 'God,' said he, 'had vouchsafed a blessed unity. Woe to the unhappy person who should break it. Yet it would be broken if there was proselytism. The cry is come out. Come out from a sect. But where? Into another sect. The spirit that is always proselytising is from Satan. I say stay in. . . . There are people who consider that denouncing churches is bearing testimony. This people will bear testimony for years, and this is all Christ will get from them. I warn you beware of trying to get people away from the folds where they have been fed.'" (Drummond's Life, pp. 57, 75.)

Mr. Moody used to send requests before him to the places where he was about to labor, that there should be prayer for the Holy Spirit, whilst the Brethren think it would be "almost blasphemy" to pray for the Spirit. What intelligence on the part of the Brethren, or what mis-information, or deceitfulness, is implied on their part in referring to Mr. Moody as one who agreed with their peculiar views.

Here is what the late Mr. Spurgeon is reported to have once said :—

"Pray to be delivered from inspired men and women, whether it be an infallible Pope, or a Plymouth Assembly met in an upper room, with the Holy Ghost as president."

#### OTHER TESTIMONY *re* PLYMOUTHISM.

We could give abundant testimony from competent witnesses, did space permit, to show what is usually thought of the Brethren by those who had opportunities of knowing them. Take a few examples :

A few years ago, Dr. J. Laing of Dundas, Ontario (Presbyterian), issued a pamphlet on the Brethren's views of the Second Advent. One Mr. Grant, a Plymouth Brother, wrote a tract in reply. Here is part of what Dr. Laing says of this tract :—

"The tract affords as good an illustration as I could desire of that self-complacent arrogance, and claim to superior piety, of which I complain, and of which our friends seem to be utterly unconscious, which leads them to fancy that no one is an honest, earnest student of prophecy, or knows the Bible, or is guided by the Holy Spirit, but themselves. . . . It also illustrates the subtle, ingenious, and evasive mode of argument which our friends use in support of their theory, and the extraordinary shifts and pet phrases to which they resort in order to turn the edge of the sword of the Spirit, and the

point of a text. . . . I know too well that he and all who have embraced these views are beyond the reach of argument, and will treat anything I may say as the folly of one who is bold (2 Corinthians x. 3), wanting in honesty and courtesy, and untaught of God, inasmuch as I am not of their opinion." (Appendix to "The Second Coming of our Lord.")

Here is another testimony, which the Brethren ought specially to respect, for it is given by one whom they sometimes claim as one of their own number. It is that of the Rev. Mr. Craik, of Bristol, England (Baptist), colleague of the late famous Mr. Muller of the same city. Mr. Craik had opportunities to know the Brethren well. He writes of them as follows:—

"Oh, what a terrible thing is party spirit! Am I not justified in discarding and avoiding it? The truth is, Brethrenism, as such, is broken to pieces. By pretending to be wiser, holier, more spiritual, more enlightened than other Christians; by rash and unprofitable intrusion into things not revealed; by making mysticism and eccentricity the test of spiritual life and depth; by preferring dreamy and imaginative theology to the solid food of the Word of God; by the adoption of a strange and repulsive phraseology; by the undervaluing of practical godliness; by the submission of the understanding to leading teachers; by overstraining some truths and perverting others; by encouraging the forwardness of self-conceit; by the disparagement of useful learning; by grossly offensive familiarity of speaking of such sacred matters as the presence and teaching of the Holy Ghost; and by a sectarianism all the more inexcusable, that it was in the avoidance of sectarianism that Brethrenism originated; by these and similar errors, the great scriptural principles of church communion have been marred and disfigured."

The words of this last witness are to the point. His congregation had been once a Plymouth Brethren one, but was excommunicated by Darby because it would not "judge" what he supposed to be Newton's heresy, already noticed. The congregation came eventually to be a fully organized Baptist congregation.

Mr. Groves, who has been already mentioned, and whom some regard as the founder of Plymouth Brethrenism, whose piety is said to have been unquestionable, but who greatly lamented the form of separation from the churches that the system soon assumed, wrote as follows:—

"Your government . . . will soon become one wherein is overwhelmingly felt the authority of men; you will be known more by what you witness against than what you witness for; and practically this will prove that you witness against all but yourselves, . . . and, being 'one of us,' will become a stronger band than oneness in the power of the life of God in the soul."

These last two quotations are made from Dr. Reid's work, already mentioned, where several similar testimonies can be found.

A pamphlet appeared very lately, entitled "The Unity of the

Spirit, or Failure of Brethrenism as a United Testimony," by one W. J. Fenton (Toronto: Arbuthnot Bros. & Co.). The writer does not say whether he is one of the Brethren or not. But if he is not now a member, he would seem to have been so until very recently. He still holds the Brethren's views regarding present churches being Babylon, although he says there are several godly ministers in them. But although he holds these views regarding the modern churches, he writes in a straightforward manner, and without the equivocations, contradictions, and self-inconsistencies, so painfully common among Brethren writers. He writes much wholesome truth about the Brethren, which they would do well to ponder. Space forbids extensive quotations here. He says:—

"But there are, unfortunately, some who have gone out as evangelists, apparently more filled with hatred to the denominations than with love to the souls of the perishing, and bent more upon getting at the adherents of 'the sects' than at sinners from the highways and hedges. . . . Such assemblies [*i. e.*, founded by such preachers] frequently die a natural death, and in other places they have been more distinguished by their hostility to 'the sects' than by the spiritual power manifest in their meetings. . . . Spiritual pride came in, and Brethren began to speak of the truths which their leaders had been chiefly advocating as 'Brethren's truth,' and to despise Christians who were still in the denominations. A harsh, dogmatic, and censorious spirit took the place of that loving recognition of all the members of the body of Christ, which had at first characterized those identified with this new movement in the church of God" (pp. 18, 19, 21). Mr. Fenton also tells us that the Brethren refused to attend Mr. Moody's meetings.

Further testimony from competent witnesses will be given later on. It may be remarked that if any one should ever dare to mention any human authority to the Brethren as any kind of a support for a religious view, they would be promptly told that the only authority to which the Brethren would submit in such matters is the Word of God. But when any well-known man is thought to express agreement with Plymouth views, the Brethren trumpet the fact far and wide.

Mr. Mackintosh, one of the chief modern Brethren writers, seeks to instruct us in his "Notes on Exodus," that any one contemplating the work of a preacher of the Gospel must be first alone with God as Moses was in Midian. It is, of course, quite right and dutiful for one so to be. But then Mr. Mackintosh would have us accept the testimonial which such a one gives himself as to the results of his seclusion. Are we to accept what any one says of himself, or of the Gospel, who alleges that he has been first alone with God? In fact, this supposed seclusion may be made one of the chief means to feed delusion, pride, and fanaticism.

Mr. Mackintosh does not seem to be aware, nor do any of the Brethren, that when a man applies for admission to prepare for the ministry in any of the modern churches, it is understood that he has

decided on matters alone with God. But the results of his decision are brought under review by those appointed for the purpose. He is examined also at every stage in his preparatory career. When finally licensed, he is not set over a pastoral charge until he is elected by the people. Such election obtains more or less in all the modern Protestant churches. The Brethren say that a preacher must be acceptable to the people. This is their only test. It is not *alone* a safe test. But there is no sense in the Brethren making so much ado about their preachers being God-given, since the Brethren themselves apply a test, as well as the churches, only a far less satisfactory one.

## VII.

### PAGANISM, POPERY, AND PLYMOUTHISM.

#### A RELIGIOUS CREED A MIRROR OF CHARACTER.

SOLOMON tells us that as a man thinketh in his heart so is he. A man's thoughts, desires, affections, words and deeds, are all the outcome of what he is, that is, of his character, and they also react on, and confirm, his character. A man's acquired character is the product of his innate disposition, his tastes, idiosyncrasies, habits, and the circumstances in which he has been placed. A man's religious creed, if he has one, and if he himself has had any hand in forming or selecting it, will depend to a greater or less extent on what his character is, as well as upon the materials which he had before him in forming or selecting his creed. A man's formed or selected religious creed, therefore, is to a considerable extent a mirror of his character.

In men whose hearts are undisciplined, the carnal elements are apt to show themselves to some extent in their religious creed. Men who hate moral law, light, tribulation, and who love ease, undue personal exaltation, and short-cuts in religion, will be sure to have their principles and tastes manifest to some extent in their creed. They will not *professedly* set themselves at open defiance to revelation. They will rather explain away, or misconstrue, in favor of their peculiar principles, several parts of the book in which the revelation is made. What a man wishes to find in Scripture he is often ready to imagine he actually does find there.

It is in the heathen religions that we best see the results of the workings of the unrenewed heart in connection with religion. The gods of the heathen, with all their weaknesses, foibles, amours, licentiousness, and cruelties, are simply mirrors of heathen corrupt imagination and character. The rites, temples, auguries, aruspices, incantations, mysteries, and secret consultations and communions with the gods, are all the outcome of supposed revelation, but in reality are the product of superstition and corrupt character. Whatever was found to suit the heart soon found its way into the religion. In Israel's case there was a continuous struggle under the Old Dispensation for the ascendancy between heathen worship and the worship of the true God. The carnal elements in the heart preferred the license of heathen worship. These elements will never consent to the surrender of the citadel within; and if they are brought into contact with Christianity, they will seek to graft on as many of the

principles of this religion as can be plausibly twisted into line with them. But, of course, when thus twisted they cease to be Christian principles. There are religions that are simply nature religions, and others that are hybrids between a nature religion and principles of Christianity distorted and grafted on.

#### CORRUPTNESS IN RELIGION OFTEN FOND OF AN ABNORMAL DUALISM.

Dualism means literally Two-ism. There are two opposite principles at work in the Christian—that of good and that of evil. There are also two spirits at work among men—the Holy Spirit and the prince of darkness. The Word of God warrants us to believe in duality of these kinds. But some people push matters of this nature to absurd extremes, as some do to every principle in Christianity, to serve their own ends. The Brethren push the figures of the apostle about the “old man” and the “new man” in the Christian to a ridiculous extreme, as we shall afterwards see more particularly. The direct result is the easing of the conscience about any sin they may commit, or may feel in them. They conveniently attribute all such to the “old man” in them, who cannot be made any better. This tends to sear the conscience, and harden the heart in impenitency. It is putting light for darkness and darkness for light. Those capable of doing such do not exhibit the tenderness of heart and conscience wrought by the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, by adherence to such a theory, the moral judgments are shown to be dislocated, and a great part of Scripture becomes a sealed letter to men of such judgments.

#### CHRISTIANITY AND THE ANCIENT GNOSTICS.

Shortly after the introduction of Christianity into the world, many Oriental nations, and heathen sages and philosophers, sought to amalgamate as much of this new religion with heathenism as they thought true. What was not considered true in Christianity they rejected. They modified parts of the New Testament to suit, so that they might thus graft on as much of Christianity as possible on their nature-religions and philosophies. This was particularly the case with that ancient class of theosophists called the Gnostics. Among other things taught by these men was that there are two principles in man, a material, or evil one, connected with the body, and a spiritual one, or good principle, which is the mind. Some of the Gnostics taught that as the bad principle could be made no better and no worse than it was, they might indulge in any kind of vice and licentiousness. Such were the Nicolaitans, of whom we read as troubling the churches in Asia of old. (Revelation ii., iii.) It is maintained by many that Simon Magus was the first Gnostic. Others of these heathen philosophers taught that we should deny and crucify the body as much as possible, so that it might not influence the mind, and that we should also engage in as much contemplation as we can, so as to fit the mind for final absorption into the fountain of all being. This is what gave rise eventually to the Romish monasteries and convents.

The persistency with which this duality in the universe—these two principles of good and evil—held its ground, through all the heathen philosophies and religions, shows that there is something in the sharp distinction thus made which agrees with corrupt human nature. The Manicheans were noted for their emphasis of this distinction. Zoroaster, the founder of the religion of the Parsees, and who flourished about six hundred years before Christ, was also a particular teacher of this dual philosophy. So are the Plymouth Brethren. Their duality is not that of Scripture. It has merely the appearance of an excuse from Scripture, but is in reality only a form of parts of the old Persian and Gnostic theosophies.

#### ROMANISM AN AMALGAMATION OF HEATHENISM WITH CHRISTIANITY.

The Roman Catholic religion is, to a very considerable extent, the result of an amalgamation of heathenism with Christianity. Of course the Pope is infallible, and, therefore, the result of the original amalgamation has not changed very much. The monasteries of this church, the masses for the dead, purgatory, the seven sacraments, the *opus operatum* (that is, the power residing in a material thing itself, such as in the literal bread and wine of the Eucharist), the lights, and vestments, the ancient relics, and images, and the chips of coffins, and old garments, with which miracles were affirmed to have been wrought, were all borrowed from the heathen, except, of course, two of the sacraments. There was even a *Pontifex Maximus*, and also a college of cardinals, in ancient heathen Rome, before Popish Rome came into existence. The original barbarous inhabitants of Rome were subdued by the charms of a heathen religion, of which lights formed a very prominent part, and lights form a particular part of the worship of the Romish Church to this day. A number of the very temples of the heathen gods were taken over by Rome, and consecrated to the Romish form of Christian worship. Many of these temples are dedicated to saints, who have not only similar names to the ancient heathen gods who were worshipped in these temples, but these saints are, some of them, patrons of those very persons, or things, patronized previously by the gods of the same temples. The mysteries, traditions, "the voice of the Church the voice of God," the papal bulls, etc., are all the result of an amalgamation of heathenism with Christianity, an amalgamation, moreover, in which the heathen elements greatly predominate. Thus it happens that the Romish religion, with its mysteries and its cheap safety, is so suitable to the natural man, and takes such a hold of him, that he seldom can shake it off, or even desire so to do. See for further information on what is here stated in regard to this church and ancient heathenism: "The Causes of the Corruption of Christianity," by Professor R. Vaughan, formerly of London University, England; Dr. Middleton's "Letter from Rome"; Blunt's "Vestiges of Ancient Manners and Customs, discoverable in Modern Italy and Sicily"; and "The Papacy: its History, Dogmas, Genius, and Prospects," by the late Dr. J. A. Wylie, Edinburgh.

## PAGANISM IN THE RELIGION OF CIVILIZED COUNTRIES.

In this country we have no outward heathen deities, but we have much of the same nature out of which the heathen mythical deities were evolved, and from which they were worshipped after they were given a fictitious existence. Unless this nature be held in proper check, we shall be certain to work upon whatever religious material we possess, whether in the form of divine revelation, or customs, worship, manner of life, etc., and mould these and fashion them, consciously or otherwise, to make the material square with our notions, tastes, and desires. A man's religious views are sometimes more a mirror of his own moral character than an index to the contents of the revelation which he professes to believe.

It is not often that the natural elements of the heathenism of the human heart find outward embodiment and organization in a religious system in Christian countries. It more frequently, to a greater or less extent, colors, and amalgamates itself with, the Christianity of such countries. It is said that Richard Baxter complained not so much of the popery of the inhabitants of Kidderminster, as of their heathenism. He referred to the relics still in their hearts of the ancient paganism of Britain. But if the natural paganism of the heart ever secures in Christian countries any outward embodiment in doctrines or religious polity, it is apt to do so in the case of those who have cut themselves adrift from the main current of life in the churches, and separated from the wealth of sanctified learning, and of Scripture interpretation, accumulated in these churches in the course of generations. Some bodies who separated from churches, quickly afterwards organized themselves under one or other of the ordinary forms of church government. These have often thus avoided many obvious dangers. Others, again, have not been so wise after secession, but have cut themselves adrift quite inexperienced, and launched forth, as it were, on a mighty ocean, where there are many storms, hidden reefs, quicksands, whirlpools, pirates, and strong currents to carry them out and away insensibly towards barbarous and dangerous countries. When people thus commit a rash act in cutting themselves adrift from proper moorings, it would be as unwarrantable for them to expect divine guidance as it would be for a man to expect such who should cast himself headlong down a steep precipice. Thus it has happened with some religious bodies who have left the churches. They have been carried further and further away on the corrupt currents of the natural heart. Little do some adherents of a so-called religious system know how the doctrines and polity of their system have in the course of many years received continuous maladroit trimming, both to avoid criticism on the one hand, and on the other, to make the polity and doctrines square with certain cravings, which were not always discerned, it may be, to have been those of the unrenewed heart. Let us now take a brief glance at the similarity between Plymouthism and Roman Catholicism.



## PLYMOUTHISM RESEMBLES ROMANISM.

1. Romanists claim that their church is the only true Church of Christ on earth. They point to its unity as a sign of this, and to the divided state of other denominations as a sign that they are not of God. They virtually say, "We are the only church on the basis of the one body and the one spirit." All this is just precisely what the Brethren say of themselves, although the claim they make to be united on any basis whatever, is, in view of the facts, infinitely absurd.

2. The Romish Church claims infallibility for the Pope and for his decrees, and says, that "the voice of the Church is the voice of God." Plymouthism claims to have the only Spirit-guided speakers in existence, and this claim is of a kind which amounts to a profession of having inspired speakers. Such speakers are, of course, infallible, and their utterances can be accepted as the voice of God. The Pope does not claim *absolute* infallibility, and the people are told of several tests which they can apply to ascertain whether the papal decrees are what they profess to be. The Brethren give *one* test. The speakers must be acceptable to the people, but if they are so, then they speak God's very words. With the Brethren it is, in the last resort, the people themselves that are infallible, and, of course, each of them must be, therefore, regarded as sharing in this divine attribute. Thus it is that they speak against deciding on any religious question by vote. And, as becomes infallible bodies, each deals largely in the bare-assertion method of proof of their respective positions, without giving any reasons. Often, however, there is a "conspiracy of silence" among ordinary members in each body.

3. The Romish Church makes faith consist of intellectual assent to religious truth. The Brethren make it consist of mere historic belief in the divine record of Christ's finished work. The former faith is not said to save, but the latter *is*, and is, therefore, the more dangerous.

4. Both systems make the entrance on salvation easy. The Romish system secures this entrance through the water of baptism, the other system through a mere historic faith. In both cases, therefore, the natural, unrenewed man can compass salvation without any change of heart.

5. The Romish Church objected to creeds as long as she could. It was the example of the Reformation that forced her to draw up some sort of creed. The Brethren still object to creeds and to theology. Both systems object to the exercise of learning for the common people in connection with religion. Thus each system presumes to a great extent on the gullibility of the common people, and objects to the ordinary means of light.

6. In connection with each system there is considerable secrecy and hidden policy. In the Romish Church there are "reserved doctrines," secret traditions, and the use of dead languages. The propagandism of the Romish Church is usually conducted through

secret and Jesuitical policy. Many of the explanations of this church are so given that they can be read in more than one way.

All this is true also of Plymouthism, except about traditions and dead languages. The Brethren also have "reserved doctrines" which they never mention to those whom they wish to wile away from the churches, until the proselytes are able to "bear" these doctrines. The Brethren sometimes publish creeds with all the Plymouth doctrines left out. One such is now before the writer, handed to him by one of the Brethren. These are traps for the unwary. How often in every country, we may say, have Brethren secured, under false guises, entrance to pulpits, and split up congregations by this means, and thus driven ministers from the sphere of their labors. Especially when there is an awakening in a congregation do the Brethren seek to steal away the young converts. They literally "lie in wait" for them.

Mr. Burnet, of Kemnay, as quoted by Dr. Reid in "Plymouth-Brethrenism Unveiled," writes as follows: "We in Kemnay have suffered sadly in this way. It is all fudge to talk as they do about the conversion of sinners. What they want and aim at professedly is *proselytism*. They are not like the apostle Paul who trembled at interfering with another man's line of things. Having pursued this devilish work in Britain for a long time, they are now proceeding to do the same on the continent of Europe. In one city in France (St. Etienne) where for some time there has been a most blessed Protestant movement, and of a very genuine description (I speak as an eye-witness) they have introduced themselves within the last two or three years and committed the most fearful havoc." ("Plymouth-Brethrenism is Antichrist," by A. G. Burnet, of Kemnay, p. 12.)

Dr. Reid says:—"We readily accord to the Brethren the right to hold their own views, and preach them. But no man has a right to come before the public professing one thing while he is really aiming at another, and which other could not be gained, were the desire to gain it openly avowed. Let the emissaries of this new sect frankly avow their principles and design; and if, in consequence, they secure fewer places of meeting and gather smaller audiences within them, they will, at least, sustain the character of straightforward men; and that is nobler than even the conversion of church members to Brethrenism." ("Plymouth-Brethrenism Unveiled and Refuted," p. 15.)

Plymouth writers have been known to change the words of authors of eminence from whom they quoted, and to publish their own version of the doctrines treated of, as if they were the views of the author quoted from. When challenged for this dishonesty they merely replied that it was done with the object of doing good. But we know what the apostle says about doing evil that good may come. (Romans iii. 8.) It is Dr. Tregelles who makes this charge of garbled quotations against the Brethren, and he was perhaps the most famous scholar whom the Brethren ever had in their ranks. But he could not stay there. Thus it will appear that the Brethren and the Romanists are at one in the opinion that the end justifies the means,

and that no faith need be kept with heretics. There are probably several Brethren who would not agree with these doctrines, but so, also, there are several Romanists.

It is common among the Brethren writers to write in a manner that it can be taken to mean one or other of two things. Witness, for instance, Mr. Mackintosh's notes on Exodus, where he writes of the Egyptians, so that any reader would be simple indeed unless he saw clearly that the writer means the modern churches by these. Yet, were he challenged for so writing of the churches, he has left himself room to make his defence. He does everything but name them. Again, the Brethren doctrine of saving faith could hardly bear to be stated nakedly—at least so the Brethren themselves seem to think—for they very seldom so state it. Their usual method of conveying what is meant by it is by doing this under cover of explaining substitution, as we shall afterwards see. Thus a march is apt to be stolen upon some simple readers, and they are likely to find themselves believers in the Plymouth sense, ere they are aware of the fact. The Brethren writers also frequently sign not their full names, but their initials, to their productions. This can be made to serve some very obvious ends. It is said by some that the rank and file of the Brethren very seldom argue. They simply assert. This also is very characteristic of Romanists.

It is related of some Brethren that they prevent church members who join their ranks from avowing the change as long as it can serve any proselytising purposes to keep it secret. "Return to your people and do so and so. Do not avow the change, and you will the more easily instil your sentiments." "Protestant Jesuits," exclaims the relator of the facts (Mrs. Gilbert in Reid).

7. The Romish Church calls the imputed righteousness of Christ, in which the Protestant reformed churches believe, an "imputed fiction," and she herself believes in an "infused righteousness." This is also the position of the Brethren. They do not use the very word "infused," but they virtually mean the same thing by being made partakers, as they think, of the essential righteousness of Christ. Mr. Mackintosh says it is the "new creature" that is justified. The Bible says it is the ungodly.

8. In the Romish Church the duality in the Christian finds expression in the contemplation, self-denial, and seclusion, of the monasteries. In the Brethren's case it finds expression in the sharp distinction drawn between the old man and the new—so sharp as to make two literal men. The Brethren also seclude themselves from politics, and from many legitimate occupations in the world.

9. The Romish Church teaches that the Christian may not only do all that is required by the divine law, but may do more than is required. But she also says that Christians sin, and need pardon. The Brethren say that the Christian is perfect in Christ as soon as converted; and as for the moral law, it is not the rule of life at all for him, according to the teaching of the Brethren. The Church of Rome is therefore better than the Brethren in this respect, and she

also teaches and practises good works, whereas the Brethren hold very lax views on this point.

10. Both Romanism and Plymouthism misinterpret Scripture by similar methods, and for similar ends, the only exception to this similarity being that the former misinterprets by means of traditions in addition to other wrong methods. Each system misinterprets by prejudiced literalisms. For instance, the one system interprets literally, "This is my body," etc., and the other does the same with the old man and the new. Both systems find a great many types in the Old Testament where none were divinely designed as such. Mr. Mackintosh finds a type in almost every event, great and small, in the Old Testament. Sec, for instance, his notes on the early books of the Bible. This author also has an eye for all the types of evil that can be found, or created, so as to make them applicable to the modern churches. This is in true Romish style. Of course, we could make the Word of God speak anything we wished in this style of interpretation. Bellarmine, the great ecclesiastic of the Romish Church, finds a type of the great Protestant secession of the Reformation in the secession of Jereboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. The Brethren render great parts of the gospels of no effect for themselves, by teaching that much in them was intended for a "Jewish remnant" only.

11. Both systems fail to grasp eternal principles in God's Word, and are inclined to lay too much store on positive law. In the Romish Church there are seven sacraments, and some of these imprint indelible character; and one, the sacrament of baptism, regenerates. This church moreover, believes in an *opus operatum*, as we have just seen. She has incantations, charms, and miracles. The characteristics of mind and heart which produced these features of Romanism are to be seen also in Plymouthism. The Brethren also magnify one sacrament unduly. They imagine that because we have not now the *opus operatum* of the apostles' hands, we should have no ordained officers in the Church. They say we cannot get the power in any other way, whether it be needed or not. But the Romish Church claims to have apostolical succession. This ought to satisfy the Brethren. Some aver that several of the Brethren have gone over to Rome, and on account of the affinity between the two systems, we need not wonder if the allegation be true. The Brethren fail to grasp the eternity of the moral law as a regulator of heart and conduct. This of itself bespeaks a terrible deficiency of moral nature as well as of mental grasp. But where positive law really holds, both Romanism and Plymouthism are so confused in their conceptions in this sphere that they fail to perceive the circumstance, as, for instance, in regard to the Christian Sabbath, on which both systems hold similarly lax views.

In some respects Plymouthism is more unscriptural than Romanism. Romanism inculcates good works; she seeks to do something by way of carrying out our Lord's command, "Go ye into all the world," etc., whilst Plymouthism may be said to confine its evangelism to stealing the converts from the churches. Romanism does not

insist, as the other system does, on a Christian not looking at the remainder of sin within, nor does she bolster up her members by a spurious assurance of personal salvation. Let it be added, that members of Protestant churches are usually on their guard against Romanism, but Plymouthism often steals a march on several of them ere they are aware. Each system apparently revels in pronouncing anathemas on those that differ from it. Each system encourages immorality, provides an easy method of forgiveness, and denies almost everything said of it by critics.

The Romish Church holds much more scriptural views than the Brethren do with regard to offices in the Church of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the place in heaven of the Old Testament's saints, and the Second Coming of our Lord. In the expository and devotional kinds of literature in the Church of Rome there is more humility, more penitence expressed for sin, and more prayer for forgiveness, than in similar kinds of literature among the Brethren. In the latter literature there is, indeed, we may say, an express avoidance of such sentiments. Moreover, in Romish devotional literature there is more of Christ as an end, and less of Him as a mere means to advance and glorify self, than is to be found in Brethren devotional literature. In Plymouthism there is more error found in the spiritual sphere than in the other system.

Thus although in some respects Romanism has not gone so far astray as Plymouthism, yet, as has been pointed out, each of them has much of the same inherent nature, and manifest evident signs of having in the course of time trimmed, developed, and matured, the same species of provision for the same kind of clandestine aims and intentions. The fact is that every church which is most eager, like the Pharisees of old, to proselytise, is under the severest temptation to tone down Christian truth, and thus make the transit to the state of salvation seem easy to the natural man. Such a man naturally loves the system best which provides for his eternal safety, as he imagines, consistently with his being permitted to enjoy his earthly pleasures, or what he imagines to be his freedom. Both Romanism and Plymouthism *talk* of even these very things as dangers, yet neither of them makes proper provision to avoid them. Both systems *talk* of the new birth, but the one provides for it, as we have seen, by the water of baptism, and the other by the historic belief mentioned. It is not, however, to be supposed that every Plymouth Brother, any more than every Romanist, is aware of the peculiar and dangerous features of his system, for each of the systems is so contrived as to be calculated to hide a considerable part of its doctrines and features from even its own ordinary members. How bright a day it would be for the adherents of each system, if they would resolve in thorough independence to deliver their souls, and to shake themselves free from the trammels of priest-craft, ignorance, fanaticism, and superstition, and make real and persevering inquisition, so as to ascertain whether there may not be a lie in their right hand.

## VIII.

### *SOME MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PLYMOUTHISM.*

#### WHY CONSIDER THESE CHARACTERISTICS ?

THE object in calling attention to these here is to exhibit further presumptive evidence, to show that the Brethren ought not to be regarded as trustworthy interpreters of Scripture, nor safe public teachers of the Christian religion. To be a capable interpreter of Scripture, and to be able to deduce proper doctrines therefrom, one requires, among other essential qualifications, to possess a mind well disciplined and logical, well informed, apt in the perception of what is obviously unreasonable, far removed from being fanciful, fanatical, or erratic, and from being ready to stumble into glaring inaccuracies or gross inconsistencies. But, unfortunately, none of the Brethren give evidence of being possessed of a mind of this character. In fact, some of the strange views entertained by all Brethren writers, as well as the manner and methods of these writers in setting forth their views, would, even alone, preclude the thought of such views having been formed by properly disciplined minds.

Wherever we find the belief that the Holy Spirit has been given to supersede the necessity, to a greater or less extent, for the diligent exercise of the mental faculties in the search for, and the apprehension of, Christian truth, there we are apt also to find these faculties more or less dormant and incapable in connection with religion. In such a case, in place of the possession of a valuable body of properly ascertained Scripture doctrines, and properly verified methods of Scripture interpretation, we are likely to meet with crude and fanciful views, or rather impressions, obtained at second-hand from some party leaders.

We can infer as to whether or not a man has a mind possessed of the necessary qualifications for Scripture interpretation, when we have an opportunity of seeing, and are capable of judging, the productions of his mind. To form correct conclusions about some of the productions of the Brethren leaders' minds is by no means difficult. Let us look at some of these productions.

#### PLYMOUTHISM AGAINST REASON AND LEARNING.

Brethren authors write, and ordinary Brethren members speak, unfavorably regarding learning, a college education, and scientific attainments, in connection with the Christian religion. Many of the Brethren speak disparagingly even regarding the very exercise of

reason itself in the same connection. These Brethren would probably heartily agree with the versifier who says :—

“ Learning, that cobweb of the brain ;  
 Profane, erroneous, and vain.  
 A trade of knowledge as replete  
 As others are with fraud and cheat.  
 An art t' encumber gifts and wit,  
 And render both for nothing fit.”

“ C. H. M.” (Mr. Mackintosh), one of the chief modern Brethren writers, says :—

“ Mere human wisdom and learning . . . may qualify unrenewed nature to figure before the world, but the man whom God will use must be endowed with very different qualifications.” (Notes on Exodus, p. 44.)

This author frequently writes thus, as if half ashamed to state his views plainly, and evidently prefers to convey them by unworthy innuendoes—a cowardly method for misleading simple people, with at the same time an ill-concealed desire to escape the criticism of intelligent readers, a style very common with this author. It is a style not uncommon also, unfortunately, with other Brethren writers. “ C. H. M.” does, indeed, say elsewhere in the same volume, that learning alone will never fit one to be a gospel preacher. Every one admits this, but none of the Brethren ever say that learning is of any use in this direction. “ C. H. M.” regards the learning received by Moses at the Egyptian court as having been entirely useless in the way of contributing to fit him for his future work. He regards the learning of the apostle Paul also in the same light. It is needless here to point out to intelligent readers how absurd such views are. We shall refer to learning and education at somewhat more length afterwards, and, therefore, need not at present dwell on them.

Several of the ordinary Brethren may be frequently heard speak against the use of reason, or of the exercise of the intellect in connection with the Christian religion. Plymouth authors do not venture so far, at least in that part of their teaching that comes before the public. But the probability is, since the ordinary Plymouth Brother has it so often on his lips, that this teaching about reason is among the “ reserved doctrines” of which these writers are possessed. Ordinary members of the Plymouth body, when discussing a religious subject with some of a different persuasion, and when they are about to be silenced, often pass some disparaging remark about the use of reason in connection with such a subject; and they either state, or evidently wish it to be understood, that they themselves are possessed of some internal light—a spirituality of mind—which shows them their side is the right one.

Dr. S. P. Tregelles, who was for a time one of the Brethren, but who could not stay among them, says of them :—

“ Indeed, it has been painful to hear earnest and real desire

definitely to study the Word of God regarded and termed by some [i.e., of the Brethren], as being occupied with the letter of Scripture. 'Oh,' they say, 'this head knowledge, this intellectual study of the truth, how it does lead our minds away from Christ.' Of course, with this tone of feeling all critical study of the Scripture is decried; it is deemed a waste of time." (Tregelles in Reid.)

#### A PREMIUM ON IGNORANCE.

All this teaching on the part of the Brethren is on a par with the well-known dictum of the Romish Church, that "ignorance is the mother of devotion." This means that the more ignorant a man is, the better he will worship. You may teach the ordinary member, says the Romish Church, to gaze on the form of the cross, but you need not explain to him whether it is the form, the wood, or the great sacrifice offered on it, that connects the cross with salvation. In certain cities of Spain in the dark ages, some of the better informed people, including several physicians, objected to the cleansing of the streets, because, said they, the filth gives a certain crispness to the air, which makes it more bracing and healthy. Similarly, the moral filth of ignorance, and of its usual concomitants of superstition and bigotry, would appear, in the Brethren's eyes, to make the reading of the Bible more bracing and healthy. "When ignorance is bliss," they would say, "'tis folly to be wise." But what a libel on our religion!

If it be incumbent on us to set aside the use of our reasoning faculty in the interpretation of Scripture, then let us regard it as our duty to interpret it as unreasonably as possible. In the Brethren's view, probably an untutored savage from the wilds of Africa would be the best interpreter of God's Word. If a man should be in such a mental condition as that when he reads the parable of the sower, for instance, he should be of opinion that the stony ground meant the Giant's Causeway, he would be the fittest interpreter of sacred writ. If, indeed, we should desire beings entirely devoid of reason to interpret Scripture for us, we could hardly procure them even from a lunatic asylum itself. We would require to go to the lower animals for them. Although, without reason, we could neither be moral nor accountable beings at all, yet we might even then be operated upon, after the manner of Balaam's ass; but we are nowhere, if not by the Plymouth Brethren, bidden aim at this as our pattern. "Whatever is opposed to reason," says Luther, "is much more opposed to God. How should not that be contrary to truth divine," says he, "which is opposed to human truth and right reason." As well bid us see and hear without eyes and ears, as bid us understand God's message without the exercise of our reasoning faculty.

It is, indeed, the case, that many truths are beyond the capacity of *our* reasoning faculty to comprehend. But no truth, in any sphere, can ever possibly be *against* reason. An infant's reason cannot comprehend the working of a steam-engine. But this does not say



that the same is also beyond the capacity of anybody's reason to comprehend. It is likewise the case, that some men of great reasoning power, and of great learning as well, have sometimes gone astray in their conclusions, just as a good singer may sometimes "go off" the tune. But who would ever be so foolish as to allege, except it be the Plymouth Brethren themselves, that every subject of study, every means, faculty and sphere, in connection with which men sometimes commit mistakes, ought to be entirely abjured? If they ought, then nothing whatever connected either with this world or the next, ought ever to be studied, for there is no subject of study in connection with which men do not sometimes commit mistakes. In that case, the Scriptures themselves ought to be avoided, because many mistakes are committed in the endeavor to understand them. Our Lord and His Gospel ought also to be shunned, for they are both set for the fall of some as truly as for the rise of others. So also our senses ought to be destroyed, and man ought to mutilate himself, because his senses are the inlets of various lusts and inordinate desires, and all true piety ought to retire to the monastery, the hermitage, or the desert. Parts of Plymouth teaching, as well as of Romish teaching, do, indeed, tend to produce such unhealthy seclusion and retirement.

#### PLYMOUTHISM BARTERS AWAY THE LIBERTY OF THE REFORMATION.

Plymouthism, in its opposition to learning and reason, virtually seeks to barter away, as the price of the allegiance of her unthinking members, all the liberty and intellectual independence won by the Protestant Reformation. And it has been invariably found that fanatics, and ignorant, prejudiced, or superstitious, religionists, who wished to keep a hold of their votaries, have been jealous of these latter coming in contact with any person or thing that would likely be a means of light to them. Every one knows how jealous the Romish Church is on this point. She does not want her ordinary members to think. The darker she can keep them, the better she can impose her falsehoods upon them. The Brethren leaders are acting in line with this policy, when they endeavor to prejudice their followers against the light of learning and reason—reason, the "candle of the Lord" in the soul. There is in such policy a virtual confession that the systems that adopt it could not endure in the presence of light. They can flourish only in the dark. Light is always felt to be tyrannical by misleaders and evil designers. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light." Bishop Sampson truly says: "You will find in all systems of error a tendency to prevent men from thinking. Tyrants," he adds, "do not wish their people to think." All this is of a piece with the refusal of Plymouthism to publish its creed, for a creed is a means of light. Both Plymouthism and Romanism hate creeds for the common people. Each system virtually says to its votaries :

"Open your mouth and shut your eyes,  
And I'll give you something to make you wise."

## SOME PET SAYINGS OF PLYMOUTHISM.

Some of the Brethren's views, as already noticed, do not evince that there was much intelligence in their formation. Neither is much common-sense shown in their continual iteration. It does not evince high intelligence to be disparaging creeds and theology. There are some pet sayings of Plymouthism that also bear testimony regarding its mental characteristics. The Brethren profess to bemoan the divided state of Christendom, and they keep on saying that "all sectarianism is sin." Yet, the method they have taken to heal the divisions they profess to lament is to make an *extra* division. Their plan for curing the sectarianism they bewail is to make *another* sect, and that the most bitterly sectarian of all sects.

And how much common-sense is shown in the Brethren's pet saying, that "separation from evil is God's principle of unity." They separated from what they deem the evil of the churches, but are they united among themselves? What a lurid light their own history sheds on the falsehood of this favorite saying of theirs! They are willing to be called "Brethren," but what an ironical comment does their annals afford on this name, as applied to *them*! Let them put their favorite sayings, their history, and their name side by side, and contemplate the picture for a little. It may possibly do them some good. Their pet sayings, however, may still make some capital in alluring the unwary and the unthinking; therefore, they are allowed to remain as part of the Plymouth creed. But were the Brethren thoroughly upright and intelligent, would they permit such statements to remain in their creed, or in their mouths?

The statement that "separation from evil is God's principle of unity," is so grotesque on the face of it, that it may afford a light on the Brethren's capacity to interpret Scripture. Do they imagine it is the Holy Spirit that teaches them such nonsensical notions? As well might they tell us that if a man and a horse escaped together from a burning building, the man and the horse would be united to each other. In this case there would be separation together from evil, but would there also be unity? If a bachelor and a spinster left a church together, would they be sure to be married to each other by the act, or even after the act? One man might leave a church because he did not think it evangelical enough. Another might leave the same church at the same time because he thought it *too* evangelical. Would these two men be sure afterwards to be united to each other in religious matters?

But this pet Plymouth saying, however it may appear to carnal eyes, must be professedly deduced by the Brethren from Scripture, for none more strenuously object to philosophizing in religion than they do. Yet here, as in much else, they carefully abstain from adducing the texts on which they found.

It shows a deficiency in intelligence, information, or in candor, on the part of the leaders of the Brethren, that the latter are never told that all their peculiar beliefs, with the exception of their doctrine of

perfection, are only old and exploded heresies, well known even to moderately informed readers of church history. Hardly any but the Brethren themselves could hold such an irrational and unscriptural doctrine as the Plymouth doctrine of perfection. It differs from every other doctrine of perfection ever known. The idea that one could be holy with the holiness of another is very irrational—just as irrational as the conception that one object could be white with the whiteness of another. That one should satisfy the demands of justice on behalf of another is both scriptural and rational. But probably the Brethren cannot see the difference between the two points.

#### PLYMOUTHISM AND MAJORITIES.

The Brethren love to call attention to the circumstance that majorities have often been wrong, and minorities right, on religious questions. There is evidently an uncomfortable feeling among them lest people who can reflect, will think of the probability of the Brethren being wrong in their views, when the overwhelming majority of professing Christians is to be found on the other side. But if the Brethren themselves ever came to be in a majority, we would no doubt soon hear the last of this kind of credential. If majorities have been often wrong, it has usually been when they were corrupt, not when equal in piety and intelligence to the minority.

Presumably it is on account of the Brethren imagining majorities to have been generally wrong, that they object to voting on religious questions. In regard to deciding anything in connection with religion by the vote of the majority, one Plymouth writer says:—

“It is a human principle, such as the world is obliged to act on, because it has no other way of getting out of its difficulties. That is, it entirely denies the guidance of the body by the Holy Ghost—His presence there—the very point as to this which the Brethren were called out of God to bear witness to, alike against the dissenting and Popish principles.” (“The Bible Treasury,” Vol. II., p. 351.)

It is little, if anything, short of profane in this writer to allege that God called out the Brethren from the churches, or from anywhere else, to bear witness to such a senseless and fanatical theory. The ridiculous notion expressed by this writer is another of the many means we have for seeing the true nature of Plymouthism. When you have any religious question to decide, simply be quiescent, and the feelings that come up in your heart are always from the Holy Spirit, and indicate the direction in which you ought to move. You must not even pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance. This is something like the process of the thought-readers. Satan, the “old man” within, and the lusts of the flesh and of the mind, pride, etc., are evidently discounted by the Brethren. No such means can defile their pure thoughts. All their thoughts on religious questions are from the Holy Spirit only, and if any rule, law, order, light of reason, be had recourse to, the Holy Spirit's prerogative is interfered with. This is precisely the root feelings and notions of fanaticism; but

there can be no such thing according to the Brethren's ideas, at least, not in connection with any one that once comes out of the churches and joins the Brethren. And they imagine that it is the Holy Spirit that teaches them such notions! Would that the Brethren pondered properly what kind of light is in them, which they seem to imagine to be divine.

And what if one man at a meeting should feel that the Holy Spirit is leading him to decide a question one way, and another man at the same meeting feels that the same Spirit is guiding him to take an opposite view on the same question? How, in this case, is the decision to be arrived at as to which direction the Holy Spirit really means the men to take? Does the like of this phenomenon never occur among the Brethren? Do they mean to say that with their multitudinous divisions and endless strifes, the Holy Spirit guides them always in the right direction on every religious question? What was the need of the apostle giving instructions to Timothy, or Titus, or to any of the churches, if the Brethren's principles and methods were enough? It is, no doubt, by the same means that the Brethren make out the proper interpretation of Scripture. All the notions that come up in their minds when reading any passage in sacred writ, are from the Spirit! They evidently give full license to the mind and feelings, discarding reason, rules for interpretation, and common-sense, as all too profane, and they abandon themselves to the currents they feel stirring within. This is how they have learned that the modern churches are Babylon. This is just the mantle of the Irvingite prophets that has fallen on the Brethren—the prophets that were so often duped and hoaxed, and made the sport of circumstances. May the Brethren be delivered from such delusions.

If a religious body ought never to take any step, nor decide any religious question, except they be all unanimous, one dissenting member can put an effectual veto on any proposed action, in favor of which all the others are unanimous. The members of the churches, even in apostolic times, were far from being unanimous on every religious matter. Prominent Christians, and even apostles themselves, sometimes differed from one another. (Acts xv. 39, 40; Gal. ii.)

Were the members of the Corinthian Church unanimous when they had such strife—one party of Paul, another of Apollos, etc.? Even when the Holy Spirit did inspire some of the members, not a few of them were disorderly. Do the Brethren themselves never vote? Are they always unanimous?

#### PLYMOUTHISM AND CONTROVERSY.

The manner and methods commonly employed among the Brethren, when they endeavor to reply to criticism made upon their system, do not evince much intelligence nor fairness, and particularly not much capacity to understand the real nature of proof. We shall consider the unfairness immediately, under the Moral Characteristics. But

some of the Mental Characteristics of the Brethren are so closely allied to—so much of a piece with—their Moral ones, that the two often manifest themselves together, mixed up in the same statements. It is not needful here, however, to endeavor to distinguish the one from the other wherever the two kinds appear closely allied. Any one of ordinary intelligence, who may think it worth his while to study the Brethren's mode of meeting criticism upon their system, may observe the characteristics which will be here mentioned.

As is often the case among ordinary Romanists, so it is also found among ordinary Brethren, that there is a "conspiracy of silence" as to their peculiar doctrines. But when they advance beyond this stage, and endeavor to prove their doctrines, they are likely to use their favorite method of proof, namely, what we may call the bare-assertion method. They frequently have recourse to this method when they seek to establish a case of their own, and especially when endeavoring to reply to an opponent of their system. According to this style they virtually say, "It is all as we say it is, not otherwise, and this man cannot understand us, because he is lacking in spirituality of mind; what he says is false." A specimen of this style of argument, as well as samples of other Plymouth styles, may be found in "Accusers of the Brethren." This tract is less than a tenth of the volume to which it assumes to be a reply, and this fact of itself may indicate how much the bare-assertion method of proof is had recourse to therein.

The bare-assertion style may suit Romanists and Brethren, who are accustomed to receive statements from their religious authorities as if these latter were divinely inspired, and therefore infallible. It may suit those also who profess to be the only Spirit-guided gospel preachers in Christendom, merely to *assert* or *pronounce* without giving any reasons. This oracular method of deciding a question may likewise suit the priests of heathen peoples. But independently-thinking people will demand more cogent proof than mere assertion from the side to which they will give their adherence.

The bare-assertion method of proof, even when thought to have been employed on a certain occasion by one so eminent as John Wesley, could by no means satisfy the independently thinking author of "Theron and Aspasio." In "Aspasio Vindicated," Hervey addresses Wesley in these rather severe terms, which, if they applied in any measure to Wesley, apply much more to the Brethren: "Among all the excellent things which in your studies and travels you have learned, have you never learned that between saying and proving there is a wide difference? Never did I meet with a person so ignorant of this very obvious truth. [Hervey wrote before the time of the Plymouth Brethren.] . . . Strange that a man of ordinary discernment should offer to obtrude upon the public such a multitude of naked, unsupported, magisterial assertions,—should be able to persuade himself that a positive air will pass for demonstration or supply the place of argument. If this be to demonstrate, if this be to confute, the idiot is as capable of both as the philosopher." (Pages 235, 238.)

## SELF-ASSERTIVE AIR OF PLYMOUTHISM.

That there is a kind of positive, self-assertive, air about the Brethren, several competent witnesses do plainly testify, although it would be probably incorrect to aver that the testimony would apply to *all* the Brethren. But when the Brethren talk to members of churches about religion, there is often felt a repulsive air of conscious superiority connected with many of them—let us hope not connected with them all. Several competent judges have also noticed in them the lack of perception of the clearest proof of their errors. They seem not open to conviction, even when silenced. Their perversion and abuse of Scripture texts have also struck several observers with surprise. Let the remarks of one or two competent witnesses be quoted, and let the suggestion be here ventured, that it would be infinitely better for the Brethren if they would earnestly and candidly endeavor to bring themselves to admit the thought, that the witnesses quoted may have had some other reasons for their views than mere lack of spirituality of mind. Let the Brethren ponder rather than carp.

Dr. W. Reid writes of the Brethren thus :—

“They shrink from controversy, and rely more for success on persistent assertion, addressed to those who are ever longing for some new thing, and who are too ignorant to detect the error and confront it with the truth.” (“Plymouth-Brethrenism Unveiled,” p. 15.)

Here is part of the testimony of the Rev. J. Nichols, Montreal (Episcopal), given in a recent 16-page pamphlet :—

“There are few people on earth who carry on so large a business in parading Scripture, holiness and logic, with so small an amount of capital invested. Yet they are never amenable to argument. You may pelt them with logic ; you may knock them from pillar to post with Scripture ; you may leave them without a breath, or a word to say for themselves, and in five minutes after they will as coolly proclaim the same errors to some one else, as if nothing had happened. In closing, we strongly urge that our policy must not be to argue with them, but to fully instruct our congregations in the truth of the Bible—to thoroughly indoctrinate the young and so guard them against these and other forms of error. . . . In our judgment their errors are more fatal than those of the Roman Catholic. Repentance and the agency of the Holy Spirit, in working out the great purposes of Christian life and character, have no place in their creed. They are as bigoted as Mohammedans, and as self-righteous as the Pharisees.”

## IX.

### *SOME MORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BRETHREN.*

**I**F a man has had only one talent bestowed on him mentally, he will not be held responsible for the exercise of ten, although he will be accountable for the proper training and discipline of the talent conferred on him. But whatever valid excuses may be made for a man's shortcomings in the mental sphere, he is not excused for dishonesty, duplicity, pride, malice, sloth, or selfishness. If a man is wilfully and habitually guilty of any of these vices, the Word of God, and even popular instinct itself, points out that he ought not to be regarded as possessed of the Holy Spirit, or spirituality of mind, or proper relationship to God, and, therefore, also, cannot be a trustworthy interpreter of God's Word. Although a man should say, and even should he himself imagine, that he has the Christian graces in exercise towards God Who is unseen, unless he has the corresponding graces and virtues in exercise towards his fellows, and towards dutiful matters in the sphere of the physically visible, he is either mistaken or mendacious. St. John's first epistle, and other parts of the New Testament, emphasize this point. (Matt. xxv. 31-46; Luke xv. 10-16, 31; John iii. 12; xiv. 7-10; Eph. vi. 5-9; Col. iii. 22-24; 1. Tim. v. 8.)

Let us consider a few of the moral requisites for Scripture interpretation, and also whether the Brethren's conduct give evidence of their possessing these.

#### PLYMOUTHISM, HUMILITY AND REVERENCE.

One prime moral requisite is humility, and so also is the kindred grace of reverence (Prov. i. 7; Ps. cxi. 10; xxv. 14). "By humility," says one, "I mean not the abjectness of a base mind, but a prudent care not to overestimate ourselves on any account." Another says, "We might as well not meditate on divine things at all, as to think in the self-sufficiency of a proud heart. If one has a great idea of himself," adds the writer, "it is the only great idea he is ever likely to have." Anything of the temper and disposition of those who think "We are the people, and wisdom will die with us," is inimical to the proper study of that religion which can be best apprehended by the childlike disposition. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit, there is more hope of the fool than of him." "If a man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth not yet as he ought

to know." If there is danger of pride from the *real* possession of spiritual attainments, how much more danger from an *imaginary* possession of such? (2 Cor. xii. 7.)

We may conclude from Scripture, reason, and common-sense, that if a man have no deference nor humility in exercise in his relations with those persons among the seen whom he ought to regard as his superiors, he is not likely to have the graces of humility and reverence in exercise in his relations with God whom he has not seen. How, then, did the originators of Brethrenism comport themselves in relation to the many thousands in the churches in their day whom they ought to have regarded as their superiors in wisdom, gifts, learning, and piety? How do Brethren to-day conduct themselves towards those members of churches whom they ought to regard as their superiors? Of course, the lack of the virtues mentioned may be manifested by one failing to recognize those who are really his superiors, as well as by an improper attitude towards those whom he may admit to be such.

We should not have wondered if we had read of Darby, when he came to hold his new views, having had so much misgiving as to the correctness of his own judgment, that he had become almost paralyzed. But instead of such being the case with him, we read of himself and his coadjutors speaking and writing against all the churches as Babylon, mere masses of ruins, in fatal and irreclaimable apostasy, and as grievous to the Holy Spirit; and all this they did notwithstanding the wealth of piety, learning, and biblical scholarship, in all the Protestant churches of their time. Who will say that such conduct showed much humility, modesty, or reverence? It is certainly well for a man to have what is called "the courage of his convictions," but such courage is best seen when the carrying out of his convictions involves considerable danger, temporal loss, or the exercise of much self-denial. But if his convictions lead him in directions where others have made shipwreck, and directions against which he is warned by the almost unanimous voice of those whom he ought to regard as more experienced judges than himself, then a determination on his part to proceed in that direction, with little or no consideration for the convictions of more competent judges, is not courage but foolhardiness. To be confident in such circumstances would not manifest modesty, reverence, humility, or deference to the opinions of others, but rather great self-assertiveness and self-conceit. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

Any one who is in the habit of reading the works of great Scripture commentators, and takes up some literary religious production of a typical Plymouthite, may soon perceive the difference between the two kinds of writers. The truly great writer is always reverent, respectful to eminent opponents, shows a knowledge of various views, estimates carefully their merits, and comes to his own conclusions on controverted points often with doubts, and always with becoming modesty, when the opinions of other eminent writers are different from his own. The typical Plymouthite writer, however, is generally confident,



self-sufficient, and jaunty; hardly ever any doubts with him. Probably he thinks it would scarcely be consistent with being Spirit-guided that he should have any doubts. He often does not even seem to be aware when all eminent commentators are against him, and he gives his own bare assertion merely, without any attempt at proof that he is right on highly controverted points, and he makes his assertions with an air of authority and superior wisdom which is really ludicrous, when we consider the opinions which are thus disposed of with no show of reason or respect.

The unscriptural method by which the Brethren arrive at what they believe to be a personal assurance of salvation, is most unfavorable to humility. We shall see their method afterwards. Also, their ideas of sin, and of the "old man" in the Christian, have a similar effect. In fact, unless the Brethren's hearts are more scriptural than their doctrines regarding these subjects, there will be a very considerable part of Scripture a sealed letter to them.

#### PLYMOUTH ASSUMPTION OF SPIRITUAL SUPERIORITY.

Every writer on Plymouthism whom we have read, and who was not an adherent of the system, has noticed the repulsiveness of the assumption on the part of the Brethren of spiritual superiority to other professing Christians. Many of the Brethren assume, not merely superiority in spirituality of mind for Scripture interpretation, but they will presume to judge in a moment or two's conversation with a man, as to whether he is a Christian or not, an insight which the apostles themselves did not possess. The eleven were deceived in Judas. Peter was deceived in Simon Magus, and Paul in Demas, but the Brethren cannot be deceived. Of course, if one does not see Plymouthism to be scriptural, this is quite enough sign of him in the eyes of many of the Brethren.

But whilst the Brethren themselves assume such spiritual superiority, they detest greatly what they think to be the assumption of such in others. The one state of heart invariably accompanies the other. The Brethren particularly dislike the supposed assumption of superiority on the part of the clergy in the modern churches. As previously pointed out, Korah of old had a dislike which was very similar, and Moses tells the true reason. (Num. xvi. 10.) Even they condescend to notice the title "reverend" as applied to clergymen. This title is particularly odious to the Brethren. A few years ago, one "P. W. Emens" wrote a letter "To the Members of the Presbytery of Syracuse," when renouncing the clerical office and joining the Brethren. His letter is wholly occupied with the giving of eleven reasons for the step he had taken. The first and foremost reason is, because the title reverend is unscriptural. "Any man," says he, "taking the title *reverend* acts contrary to the principle inculcated in Matthew xviii. 8-12. . . . It is placing the few in the uppermost seats," etc. The other ten reasons are equally convincing. The same writer would, no doubt, object still more strongly to the title "lord,"

notwithstanding that the apostle recommends Sarah's example in calling even her husband such. Jonathan Edwards says in his "Religious Affections," that "He" (*i.e.*, the "proud hypocrite") "is often crying out of others' pride, finding fault with others' apparel and way of living; and is affected ten times as much with his neighbor's ring or ribband, as with all the filthiness of his own heart." So the Brethren tell their own Christians not to mourn for sin in them, for it is entirely due to the incorrigible "old man" within. In this light manner is the Plymouth Christian encouraged to regard "the filthiness of his own heart." But the Brethren who so advise, appear to be deeply affected with their "neighbor's ring or ribband" of reverend. The Brethren must highly disapprove of Paul's having addressed a certain man, "Most noble Felix."

### PLYMOUTHISM, HONESTY AND CANDOR.

Honesty and candor are also among the chief moral requisites for the successful interpretation of that Word which is the source of all true guidance in respect of moral feeling. It would not sound very well to say—This man is dishonest and deceitful, but a very good interpreter of Scripture. Straightforwardness and transparency of character and purpose are prominent traits of the sound Bible interpreter, and not merely in interpretation, but also in everything he does. He has a horror of duplicity and deceitfulness, especially in handling the Word of God, and in connection with directly religious work. He does not desire, any more than the apostle, to be thought something different to what he really is. (2 Cor. xii. 6.) He hates the "cunning craftiness" whereby some "lie in wait to deceive." He is of "the children of the day, not of the darkness nor of the night." He loves to come to the light, "that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." Let those who know the Plymouth Brethren say whether their moral conduct, especially in their proselytizing policy, tallies with such a description.

The Plymouth Brethren have "reserved doctrines" which they never mention to those whom they approach in a suave and flattering manner, in order to wile them away from the churches. They do not impart their secret teaching until the proselytes are committed and are able to bear it. When once some individuals are induced unwittingly to commit themselves to a certain course, though it were only the signing of a petition that they had not read, or knew little of, they will afterwards endeavor to defend the object of the petition, lest they should be ashamed of having taken a step in ignorance. Jesuits, Plymouthists, and bogus petition-mongers, often make considerable capital out of this weak trait in some men's characters.

The Brethren, through a species of prudery, often sign only their initials to their literary productions, as already noticed. They send forth creeds with all the peculiar doctrines of Plymouthism left out. Let church members ask the Brethren, if these be their beliefs, why then are they separate from the churches? Let the Brethren's

reputation of the unsigned literary productions of their authors, when these productions are charged with heresy, never be accepted.

The Plymouth Brethren, in much of their crusade against the churches, and in their private proselytizing attempts, frequently manifest the lack of honesty and candor. The clandestine manner in which, under the guise of friendship to ministers, the Plymouth preachers often endeavor to gain access to church pulpits, and insinuate themselves into prayer-meetings, and the cleavage in many congregations where access has been gained, is too well known to need particular description here. They have often thus rent the body of Christ. How many congregations in Ontario itself, throughout other parts of Canada, in the States, and, indeed, in all parts of the world where churches and Plymouth Brethren have existed side by side, could tell sad tales of the ravages of these foes of the churches. How frequently have godly ministers been driven from the spheres of their labors as the result of the visits to their congregations by the Plymouth Brethren. Would these ministers ever have admitted the preachers who did such work, had they come in their true colors, and not in the guise of friendly co-operators?

When there is an awakening in a congregation in any district where Plymouthists exist, the latter are then specially active in their efforts to wile away the young converts. Sometimes special services, and special preachers, are improvised in a district when there is a communion season in any of the churches, and when the hearts of young communicants are supposed to be in their first love, so as to seduce them away to the Brethren camp. In seasons of either kind, the Brethren literally “lie in wait to deceive,” and to ensnare. Unstable and untaught Christians have thus in countless instances been beguiled away, and at length left stranded on the beach, with nothing to feed them except the Plymouth heresies, the “reserved doctrines,” and the Plymouth preachers’ diatribes against the modern churches.

Is this honest work? Is it upright and becoming conduct to be pursued by the only Spirit-guided people, and the only competent Bible interpreters, in Christendom?

“ACCUSERS OF THE BRETHREN.”

On page 4 of the Plymouth tract, “Accusers of the Brethren,” the author mentions thirteen articles of belief which the Brethren hold, but which he alleges the accusers of the Brethren say they do not hold. Any reader of this tract who will read these thirteen articles, and study also the real beliefs of the Brethren as set forth in this pamphlet, may easily see that it would be difficult to cram more equivocation and misstatement within so brief a space as the author of the tract has done on this page. The object of the equivocation is evidently to ensnare readers who may be off their guard. Take one or two instances:—

One of the beliefs the author says the Brethren hold, but which he

says the Brethren accusers allege they do *not* hold, is "The proper humanity of Christ." Notice the cunning use of the word "proper" here. No one ever said that the Brethren do not hold what *they* think to be the proper humanity of Christ. But the humanity they believe in was a "*heavenly* humanity." Mr. Kelly (a Plymouthite) says: "His humanity was totally different from Adam, either in integrity or in ruin." According to the Brethren, it was not our humanity at all that our Lord took. The Brethren hold simply an old heresy. The prevarication in using the word "proper" may now be seen. It would have been quite easy for the author to have stated what the Brethren really *do* hold, but he carefully avoids this, and calls it "proper humanity," so as to set the trap, and make readers of the tract imagine that the "accusers of the Brethren" are unjust, and probably hold themselves a different humanity from the humanity that is proper. This is Jesuitical.

The next article enumerated is the atoning death of Christ as the ground of our justification. This is a misrepresentation. What the Brethren are accused of holding is that Christ's death *alone*, apart from His keeping the law in His life, is the ground of the believer's justification, and the author is careful never to touch on this point. The next article is, "That by the obedience of Christ believers are constituted righteous,"—another misrepresentation. The author carefully conceals the real accusation on this point, which is that the Brethren hold that the obedience of Christ in suffering on the cross alone, is that which He did as the sinner's Substitute. In every one of the other articles there is similar equivocation or misstatement.

The Brethren are evidently grateful for Mr. Reid's championship of their cause. They manifest this by their zeal in the distribution of his tract. They must be held as approving highly of his medley of misstatement, equivocation, and his vituperation of honest and friendly criticism—friendly, that is, to the Brethren themselves, but hostile to their system. But if the Brethren desire to have their cause really defended, they ought to look out and see whether some one may not be found among their number who possesses capacity, moral and mental, for the work;—moral capacity to state their case honestly and straightforwardly when he once knows it, and mental capacity to defend it, if they think it worthy of defence. It is by no means to their credit that they should commit themselves to a tract that contains so much misrepresentation. It is no credit to their intelligence if they do not see the misrepresentation. It is no credit to their morality if they see it and yet circulate it. But the simple fact is Plymouth-Brethrenism is incapable of intelligent and honest defence. This is probably the reason why no man whose works merit any serious notice has yet appeared among the ranks of its defenders, and why, if it is to stand at all, it can stand only in darkness and misrepresentation, and needs a man of Mr. Reid's mental calibre and moral fibre to prop it up.

## PLYMOUTH LOVE OF DARKNESS.

There can be no reasonable doubt but that true spiritual receptivity is hindered, and may be altogether prevented, either by pride, or by deceptive and crooked conduct. The way of the Lord must be properly prepared if His glory is to be seen, either in Bible interpretation or anywhere else. Mountains of pride, and of unwarrantably assumed superiorities, must be brought low, and crooked things must be made straight. The true Bible interpreter loves light and honesty for their own sakes, and not merely because they are the best policy. He is never heard saying one word by way of disparagement of learning and reason in the work of interpretation. He digs diligently and perseveringly for knowledge, and uses all proper means to correct his biases, and train and discipline his mind to draw proper conclusions from the materials upon which he works. He learns proper rules for interpretation, and studies the history both of mistakes and successes in the work. All this is surely very different from despising such efforts, and satisfying one's self with the lazy and fanatical notion of being in possession of spirituality of mind sufficient for all that is required.

Between obscure prophecies, the book of Revelation, and palpable perversions of other parts of Scripture, the Brethren manage to write an extraordinary chapter on Eschatology (the doctrine of the last things), and for the completion of their eschatological theories they find it necessary to insert in them a *third* coming of our Lord. With all the comings, goings, and tratlickings, of the last times, known apparently to the Brethren so precisely, the whole Plymouth account reads more like a chapter on heathen mythology than as the result of the exercise of sobriety of judgment, and sound principles of interpretation, in connection with those parts of holy writ which treat of the last things. But the confident manner of Plymouth prediction about these things, and the leading references to the benefits and exaltation of self in the midst of the whole happenings, is just what will suit the tastes of those who desire to substitute feelings of the marvellous for the diligent, faithful, and persevering, practice of the precepts of Christianity. Hundreds of times, from the Thessalonians of old to the present time, have lazy and imaginative people made the same substitution.

The spirituality of mind possessed by the Brethren, and their Spirit-guided speakers, are means, they think, for announcing the divine will direct. But darkness or dusk seems to be required to make their messages effective. Like modern spiritualists, they require to have the ordinary means of light withdrawn, and darken the room, before their seances, and ere they can announce their messages from the other world. This is suspicious. If a pedlar takes his wares from a bright into a dusky room to have them explained, his action is open to just suspicion. So the Brethren require to masquerade in false guises ere they can find effective access to church pulpits, prayer-meetings, and church members. They require to garble quotations,

to shut off ordinary means of light, and repair to dusky corners, before they can do their special work effectively. "For every one that doeth ill hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reprov'd. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God."

A few years ago the famous trial of the notorious impostor, Arthur Orton, the claimant to the Tichborne estates, took place in England. The trial lasted for some months, and elicited great public interest. It was discovered that the claimant had called on the mother of the real and long-lost heir of the estates—an old lady then in her dotage. His call was made in the gloaming, just before the gas was lit. When the old lady was brought in to see whether she could recognize the visitor as her long-lost son, she found him seated in the darkest corner of the room. With all his artifices he at length succeeded in getting the lady to recognize him as her own very son Roger. This circumstance was used by him at the trial as a strong point in his favor.

So the Brethren thus come to other people virtually in the twilight, expecting to be recognized as the real long-lost descendants of the apostolic church, and the only true heirs to the promises and to the heavenly inheritance. Those who are in any kind of dotage, or darkness, may yield to the claim. Those who are intelligent will insist on the production of satisfactory credentials, or on a thorough trial, and will cross-examine the claimants. They will not consent to have the ordinary means of light shut off. They are likely to regard it at the outset as a suspicious circumstance that the claimants seek to approach them in the twilight, and they will probably desire before deciding in favor of these claimants, to trace in them an unmistakable family resemblance to the distinguished ancestry claimed by them.

#### THE SELFISM OF PLYMOUTHISM.

There is one other moral characteristic of the Brethren which we must notice briefly ere closing this part of our subject. It is a characteristic which is most inimical to proper Bible interpretation, and one, moreover, which not a few eminent thinkers on religious subjects believe to be akin to the essence of all sin. Selfishness is the essence of sin, say many. Selfism is undue prominence to self, including excessive regard to some of those enjoyments which self may even yet come to attain. It manifests itself also in opposition to law, and to the will and rights of superiors expressed in law and rule. It loves to be a law unto itself. In religion it often seeks to explain away all real obligation.

No one can read Brethren literature—the expository, devotional, and other writings of the Brethren—without perceiving how much of self figures in them. Christ as an end is subordinated to Christ as a means. What self is to become through Christ as a means is more prominent than how Christ is to be glorified. Shepard, in his parable of the ten virgins, says something to the effect that some desire Christ

merely as they would desire a merchant that keeps good wares. To alter somewhat a statement of Thomas Goodwin, it is a very different thing for a woman to send for a physician to cure her of a malady, and to her consenting to be married to him.

The Brethren love to have an eye on the perfection they imagine they have already attained, and on the fact, as they think it to be, that they possess not merely the imputed, but the essential, inherent, righteousness of Christ. They imagine, as one puts it, that they are "God-ed with God and Christ-ed with Christ." Another says that he can never think of this opinion of the Brethren without remembering the tempter's statement, "Ye shall be as Gods."

The Brethren love to sing:—

"No condemnation. Oh, my soul,  
'Tis God that speaks the word—  
Perfect in comeliness art thou  
Through Christ, thy risen Lord."

—*Brethren's Hymn.*

The Brethren desire to keep away all thoughts of sin. Such thoughts have the tendency to humble, and to keep one in mind of the place that rightly is his. But the Brethren say that thoughts of sin will spoil our worship, comfort, service, and testimony. So they have mutilated the hymns "Rock of Ages," and "Just as I am," etc., to suit these ideas, and they have acted similarly towards other hymns. The Brethren's ideas about what thoughts of sin will do to the believer are just as diametrically opposed to real Christian experience and Bible truth as could well be imagined. "Blessed are they that mourn" has no place in the Brethren's theology for the Christian, nor has the broken heart, nor the contrite spirit. The Brethren, in the spirit they are of, could never sing the dying words of Samuel Rutherford paraphrased thus:—

"He brings a poor vile sinner,  
Into His house of wine.  
The bride eyes not her garment,  
But her dear Bridegroom's face;  
I will not gaze at glory,  
But on my King of grace.  
Not at the crown He giveth,  
But on the pierced hand;  
The Lamb is all the glory  
Of Emmanuel's land."

The Brethren will not countenance much sorrow for sin even in repentance, but seem to hurry the penitent one away as quickly as possible from this sorrow as from a ruinous plague. They will exhort and encourage the one who makes a profession that pleases them to enjoy personal assurance of salvation at all hazards. They will teach the believer about the tribulation which is to be escaped,

rather than that which is to be endured, and will direct his attention particularly to the "secret rapture," the reigning, and the glory.

Of course, we all love enjoyment, and it is our privilege, and also our duty, to seek it in the spiritual sphere. But it is quite possible to have too much of self in the seeking. When a sense of duty in connection with God's glory is practically, though it may not be professedly, subordinated to the object of seeking our own enjoyments, even in connection with the Christian religion, there is too much selfishness in our Christianity. Our enjoyments are often like our spiritual life—the best way to secure and preserve them is to deny self. There is a way of seeking to save our enjoyments which will lose them. Besides, as every experienced Christian knows, our best enjoyments often come as a sequel to periods of suffering properly endured, and periods of self-denying, dutiful, and scripturally directed, activity. Often weeping endures for the night as a preparation for joy in the morning. The love of God is often shed abroad in the heart as the result of tribulation patiently endured, with sin searched out, mourned for, confessed, and forsaken. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted," and they shall be comforted, not merely because there is a divine decree to that effect, but as a matter of natural sequence in the spiritual sphere. (Lam. iii. 40; Rom. v. 3-5; 2 Cor. vii. 9-12; James i. 4.)

The strong and characteristic antipathy manifested by the Brethren towards creeds, theology, the moral law as a rule of life, and towards learning, church organization, an educated ministry, etc., and, in short, to everything which gives light to ordinary people whereby to judge of the Brethren and their doctrines, and to everything also which has the tendency to restrict the working of self-will, and the flights of the imagination, within proper bounds, is all of a piece with their desire for unlimited enjoyment.

"How happy is he born or taught,  
That serveth not another's will."

All those things that have been mentioned are put under the ban by the Brethren, because they too strictly "crib, cabin, and confine" the sentiments and imaginations, by incessantly holding up the mirror of controlling truth.

"The beings of the mind are not of clay;  
Essentially immortal, they create,  
And multiply in us a brighter ray,  
And more beloved existence."

The divinity which requires to be patiently and diligently studied in order to be properly understood, is not the sort that suits the genius of some religionists. It is rather the one which can be inspired into them with little or no trouble on their part—the divinity which can be rapidly realized as "breeding wings within," as Milton



would say. They desiderate the "gifts" by which we could, without much struggle or effort, rapidly soar aloft into some ethereal region of perfection, where doubts can never come, where the exercise of reason and learning would be profane, and which is too lofty and blessed for even the moral law itself to be a rule of life for its inhabitants. The ordinary life of Christian faith, patience, suffering and self-denial, is far too tame for them, and even in the long-run would yield nothing, they appear to think, which would be worth the cost. It is needless to add that all this selfism, and all these flights and feelings, are inconsistent with true moral character, and with the self-denial, the calmness and sobriety of judgment, which are essential requisites for proper Scripture interpretation.

*PLYMOUTHISM AND SCRIPTURE INTERPRETATION.*

## PLYMOUTH SELF-CONFIDENT PROCEDURE.

THE history of the various kinds of interpretation, from the plausible but false down to the absurd and grotesque, which have been put on every part of God's Word, would form the best kind of evidence that correct Bible interpretation is attended with many difficulties. None are so likely to fall before one or more of these difficulties as those who imagine, as the Brethren interpreters seem to do, that the Holy Spirit has been given them to supersede the necessity of thinking of them. Brethren interpreters appear to sail quite confidently ahead with their slenderly equipped barque, without rudder, chart, or sounding apparatus. They seem either regardless or unaware of the existence in their path of many reefs, rocks, quicksands, whirlpools, and dangerous currents, where countless numbers of far more expert mariners have come to grief. Brethren captains seem confident that they alone of all the mariners on the mighty main are under the true gales of heaven, and that they have nothing to do but hoist their sails and speed right ahead.

After the mariner has properly equipped his barque, it is still his duty to pray that he may have a safe and prosperous voyage. It is his duty to use proper means for securing the safety of life and vessel, even should he like Paul of old have full assurance beforehand that none would be lost. The heavenly vision that told Paul that none would be lost, did not give him any greater skill in navigation than he had, nor did it in the least supersede the use of any rules for sailing that the captain of the vessel might have learned in a school of navigation. Paul never would have scouted these as "man-made" rules, nor would he have dreamt of shouting to those on board other vessels, and making for the same haven: All your ships are going to ruin, for you are guiding them by "man-made" rules; God is in our wind, and we have no need of such rules, nor of any officers skilled in the art of navigation. Any man aboard who thinks himself fit, can take his turn at steering our vessel past rocks and whirlpools. Come out of your ships lest ye be destroyed in their certain fate, and join ours, and there shall be the one wind and the one vessel. "Come out of doomed Babylon," say the Brethren to Church members, "and join us 'on the basis of the one body and the one spirit.'"

## PLYMOUTH BREACHES OF APPROVED RULES.

There is hardly any approved rule for Scripture interpretation which the Brethren do not set at naught. It is not meant to be here asserted that formal rules for Scripture should be *blindly* adopted by any one. Rules can be examined, and their validity judged, before they be adopted. Neither is it needful on every occasion on which one reads the Scripture that he have rules for interpretation prominently before his mind. One may, if he choose, read for devotional purposes without necessarily thinking of such rules. A physician may look into the face of his friend, and receive inspiration from so doing, without his necessarily thinking of the rules for judging of health from appearances in the face. But if the physician should intend to deliver lectures on the anatomy and expression of the human face, and on the signs of good or ill health that might there manifest themselves, he would not be justified in beginning his lectures, unless he had first studied the subject thoroughly himself, and that also with the history of all the discoveries that had been made by others in the same field. The same holds true with regard to the man who intends for the public benefit to interpret the Word of God and teach its doctrines.

Space will permit of our noticing only a very few of the many rules and principles of Bible interpretation transgressed by the Brethren. In fact, Brethren writers seem to go by no rule or principle in Scripture interpretation except the rule of trying to extract from the Word the meanings they apparently wish it to contain, so as to make these meanings fit in with their theories.

1. Brethren writers constantly transgress the rule that before we can be sure that we understand the teaching of the Bible on any particular subject, we must collect all the texts bearing on that subject, place them side by side, and draw conclusions carefully from a comparison of each text with all the others. For instance, Brethren writers quote only one class of passages about the atonement, namely, the class that refer to Christ as having died for the "whole world," for "all," for "every man," etc. But they are never found quoting the other class, which speak of His having died "for His sheep," "His friends," "for the Church," etc. At first sight the one class of passages might seem to contradict the other. But the Bible never contradicts itself. We should, therefore, study patiently how to reconcile the one class of passages with the other. Texts that intimate that Christ died "for all" were meant to correct the narrow particularism of the Jews, who were of opinion that the Messiah, when He would come, was to bless the Jews only. But the apostles showed that His blessings were meant for any one in the world who should seek to avail himself of them. He was a propitiation, not for Jews only, but for every one. As Calvinists interpret such Scripture teaching, Christ's death is sufficient for all, offered to all who hear the Gospel, suited for all, and efficient for all who will avail themselves of it. But the expression, "the doctor of the regiment," would

not imply that every soldier in the regiment was actually cured by its doctor. Christ being the propitiation for the whole world, does not carry with it that all in the world will be actually saved by Him, nor that He was the actual Substitute of all.

The great error that the Brethren commit in connection with the actual presentation of the Gospel to unsaved sinners, an error founded on the defective theory of the extent of the actual atonement, is that since, as they imagine, Christ was substituted in the room and stead of every sinner, then the sinner has nothing to do but believe the divine record of Christ's substitutionary death, and he is saved. This is a most serious error, and one which is at the root of several other Plymouth errors. We shall refer to this dangerous error when we come to treat of saving faith.

2. Brethren authors continually forget the class of persons addressed by sacred writers. What is addressed to God's people, Brethren often take as addressed to all. For instance, the prophet Isaiah speaks of "All we like sheep have gone astray, . . . and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." The Brethren take this passage as if it meant that the iniquities of all who have gone astray have been laid on Christ. But the prophet meant the iniquities of God's people only, for it is of them he is writing. And surely the Brethren themselves ought to be able to see that God's people can say both of themselves and of Christ what the unsaved cannot say. A man who is sure of his salvation can warrantably say, "Christ is mine, He gave himself for me, and I am His." This would be unwarrantable language in the mouth of the unsaved. The unsaved can say, "Christ is offered to me, suited for me, sufficient for me, and I am invited to come and partake of all the benefits of His redemption, and invited to come as I am, and now." But it is only when the unsaved man does actually come, and knows that he has taken Christ as He is offered, that he can join in the language of the saved man.

Mr. Mackintosh says in his "Notes on Exodus," that the Egyptians represent unsaved sinners. But it was not, however, for the Egyptians that the paschal lamb was slain. They had no offer of its benefits. It is incorrect, therefore, to treat as he does of the blood as having been shed for them, and as if they had nothing to do but believe the fact. At other times the same writer takes the Israelites before the passover to represent unsaved sinners. Here again there is error. The lamb was slain for Israel because they were God's chosen people before as well as after the passover. But it cannot be known of any sinner at present unsaved whether he is among God's chosen people or not. This can only be known when the sinner is known to have come to Christ. It is, therefore, a dangerous error to represent what applies to God's people only as if it applied to the unsaved sinner. But this is invariably done by all the Brethren.

A very glaring instance of the same kind of error may be constantly met with in Brethren writings in the representation made in these of the Old Testament sacrifices which were appointed for

God's Israel only as if these sacrifices had been offered also, and had actually secured the intended benefits, for those who are not God's people. This is done, for instance, by "Geo. C." in "Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment," a tractate largely circulated among and by the Brethren.

3. Often the Brethren err like the Romanists by prejudiced literalisms. For instance, they suppose from the expression, "Ye did it," or "ye did it not, unto the least of these my brethren," etc., that there must be a third class at the final judgment, strictly called the Lord's brethren. Were we to interpret the Bible thus, we should form very strange views about some important doctrines. For instance, we should suppose from the parable of the virgins that the number saved will equal the number lost. A glaring instance of the kind of misrepresentation in question is that made of the apostle's symbolism of the "old man" and the "new man." The Brethren treat these men as if they were two literal individuals inside the Christian. They make the "old man" responsible for all the sin they commit. The "new man," they say, cannot sin. This trick is very convenient for a carnal theology, but at the same time very irrational and unscriptural. If a farmer had a cow, a cross between a Durham and a Jersey, and if this animal leaped the fence into the neighboring farmer's oats, would the owner of the cow be responsible for only half the damage, because the Jersey part of the animal would never thus leap a fence? The apostle says, "The body is dead because of sin." (Rom. viii. 10.) Ought all bodies of Christians, therefore, to be buried? In the seventh of the Romans the apostle sometimes regards himself as if he were the "old man," and sometimes as if he were the "new man." What he means by such expressions is merely that there are two principles of action within the Christian. Sometimes the one principle induces the man to act, exercising his faculties, and it may be his bodily members, and sometimes the other principle does the same. But this is a very different thing from treating the Christian as if there were literally two individuals within him. Sometimes disease and health struggle against each other in the same body. But who would ever think that on this account we should speak of two literal bodies? Which of the two men do the Brethren think needs pardon? for the Brethren acknowledge that the Christian sometimes requires pardon. For which of the men did Christ die? Which of them advances in holiness? The "new man," they tell us, is perfect. The "old man" cannot be improved. Which of them, then, is bidden purify himself as Christ is pure? The fact seems to be that the Brethren are entirely incapable of perceiving that their whole theory of the two men has sprung from a prejudiced view of the apostle's figure—a view which has its root in the desire to take a light and carnally easy view of sin.

There is no warrant from the First Epistle of John for supposing that the one who is born again never commits sin. The Greek language here means that such a one does not deliberately follow a *course* of sin, which is a very different thing. But then, the Brethren abhor

anything like learning, especially in other people, even to the extent of knowing about the Greek language. But even without any knowledge of this language, the Brethren might have seen that the apostle asserts that if the Christian says that there is no sin in him, or that he does not commit sin, he is uttering an untruth. He also directs the Christian to confess his sin. Is it the "old man" that is thus directed, or the new? Or is it the "new man" that is supposed to confess the sins of the old? And which of them, then, is forgiven and receives the cleansing? The "new man" is perfect already, the Brethren think, and therefore he cannot need cleansing, nor forgiveness. And as for the "old man," he is incorrigible. He can neither be pardoned nor cleansed. The apostle also refers to an advocate. The "new man" who never sins surely does not need such. Who, then, is the Advocate for?

The Brethren commit a mistake similar to the one last noticed, in their view of the apostle's meaning in Colossians ii. 10. The prejudiced literalism here refers to the English of the authorized version: "And ye are complete in him." Here is how Mr. Mackintosh expatiates on these words:—

"Not as a matter of attainment; not ye *will* be, ye *may* be, *hope* that ye may be, *pray* that ye may be. No, he by the Holy Ghost states in the most absolute and unequivocal manner ye are complete. This is the true starting-post, and for man to make a goal of what God makes the starting-post is to upset everything. Although we have sin, it is not in self we are complete, but in Christ . . . What can be added to one who is complete? . . . Not one of them [*i.e.* of the things he has enumerated] can add anything to the one whom God pronounces complete. Could any of these things, or all of them put together? etc. We might just as well inquire whether man could go forth upon the fair creation of God at the close of the six days' work to give the finishing touch to that which God had pronounced very good." ("Notes on Exodus," 75, 78.)

Thus are the apostle's words wrested to make them appear to support a false theory. Mr. Mackintosh's ideas, on the very face of them, are absurd. The apostle meant to dissuade the Colossian Christians from giving heed to the teachers among them who sought to induce them to have recourse to invisible "angel-powers" to supplement Christ's work in their progressive salvation. They did not need to go to any other source in order to have all they required. In Christ they were made full. This by no means implied that they were now as full as they could be made, but they were in process of being filled full out of Him in whom all fulness dwells. What they had already obtained through Christ, the apostle details at some length in the context. The process is further described in Ephesians iii. 16-19. The emphasis is upon the circumstance that the Colossian Christians did not require to go elsewhere for anything they wanted—they had all in Christ, and would receive out of Him according to their preparedness. Mr. Mackintosh's idea is diametrically opposed to the express teaching of every page of the New Testament, where there is nothing more clearly

insisted on than that the Christian is not yet complete. The apostle Paul was certainly not one of those who esteemed themselves perfect, although he evidently had met with such. (Phil. iii.)

4. The Brethren often take a sacred writer or speaker, from some expression used by him, to decide a point not before him at the time for decision. Among many glaring instances is the manner in which they view the expression of the angels at our Lord's ascension, "Shall so come in like manner," etc. (Acts i. 11.)

#### WHO SHALL WITNESS OUR LORD'S SECOND COMING?

From this expression, "C. H. M.," in his booklet entitled "Papers on the Lord's Second Coming," pages 14, 15, tries to reason that Christ's Second Coming will be witnessed by Christians only, because only Christians saw Him ascend. But no one of common-sense would ever suppose that the angels meant to decide who they all were to be who should witness the Second Coming. If they did mean to decide this question, than Mr. Mackintosh has no authority whatever for extending the reference to *all* Christians, since the angels referred only to those very individuals who saw Him ascend. Further, if the angels decided who were to witness the Second Coming, and if the "so" and the "as" have as much in them as Mr. Mackintosh says, they will prove not only that those very individuals alone who saw Him ascend will see Him come again, but also that they will do so with their feet covering the same spots of ground as they then covered. But the fact is, the angels referred only to the manner in which the Lord was seen to leave the earth—that is, He went upwards, and He would come from upwards; and as a cloud received Him out of their sight, so a cloud would accompany His being again made visible. We could hardly have inferred even this latter circumstance from the angels' expression unless it were told us elsewhere. But let us hear Mr. Mackintosh himself on the point:—

"Could proof be more clear or conclusive? Either these two men in white apparel were false witnesses, or Jesus shall come in the exact manner in which He went away, . . . to be seen by His own, first of all, apart from all others, in the holy intimacy and profound retirement which characterized His departure from the world. All this, blessed be God, is wrapped up in two little words, 'as' and 'so.'"

As well reason from our Lord's statement, "Behold, I come as a thief," that the little word "as" has wrapped up in it that Jesus will plunder and steal when He comes. But our Lord here referred only to one single feature in the thief, namely, his coming by stealth. So the angels referred in the "as" and "so" only to the manner of our Lord's departure and coming, not to whom they all should be who were to see His Second Coming. Who these latter are to be, we are clearly told elsewhere. But the "as" and the "so" are supposed to be so clear to the Brethren that Mr. Mackintosh says all other passages relating to our Lord's Second Coming must be governed by this one. Rather than that the Brethren will relinquish their false theory,

the two angels must be pronounced "false witnesses," and our Lord must come a third time. There are, indeed, most stupendous results wrapped up in the "as" and "so" if they are to be held as containing all this. There is strong ground for the opinion that in making the angels decide who they are who are to see the Second Coming, the wish is parent to the thought, as it appears to be so very often in Brethren writings; and after the angels are made to refer to the beholders of this coming, the wish is parent to the thought again in making them refer to *all* Christians, since the angels themselves expressly say, "As *ye* have seen."

5. The Brethren expositors often err in the meaning they attribute to a passage of holy writ, because they do not study sufficiently the context of the passage, nor the circumstances of the people directly addressed in the passage. For instance, they imagine that the "hidden" or "secret mystery" mentioned by Paul meant the New Testament Church. (Rom. xvi. 25; Eph. iii. 5.) The term translated "mystery" is mentioned by Paul several times in his writings, and not always in the same sense. He frequently meant by the word simply the Gospel itself. (1 Cor. ii. 7-10; iv. 1; Eph. vi. 19; Col. i. 25-27; ii. 2.) At other times he meant the change of the bodies of believers at the last day. (1 Cor. xv. 51.) Also he means (Rom. xi. 25) the restoration of the Jews. There is nothing to show that in Romans xvi. 25 there is not meant by this word the Gospel in its aspect of a revelation now made clear. There is nothing either here or elsewhere to indicate that it meant the Church.

In regard to the other passage (Eph. iii. 4-6), the context shows clearly that the word "mystery" means the admission of the Gentiles, on equal terms with the Jews, to the privileges of the Gospel. This is as clearly stated as possible in the 6th verse—that the "mystery" is that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, etc. In verse 10 this "mystery," now fully revealed, is referred to as showing the manifold wisdom of God, and the manifestation is made *by the Church*, and the "mystery" cannot therefore be the Church itself, although it is exhibited in the Church's composition of Jews and Gentiles. No stress can be laid on the word "hidden" as determining the reference in the word "mystery," because both the New Testament Church and the calling of the Gentiles are the subjects of Old Testament prophecies, and with about an equal measure of light in the case of each. The serious error of the Brethren in their misunderstanding of the word "mystery" is in their supposing that there was no Old Testament Church, and there are a number of other errors springing from this one in the Brethren's ecclesiology.

The passages from the sixth chapter of 2 Corinthians, which the Brethren are so fond of quoting to church members—"Come out from among them," etc., "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," etc., have not the smallest reference to separation from churches of professing believers. Christians in Corinth were in danger, at least many of them, from the circumstance that they had friends and acquaintances among the unconverted Gentiles, that is, among worship-



pers in heathen temples, and some of the Christians were thus allured to worship in these temples. In the heathen festivals there was not only a worshipping of idols, but this was also associated with obscene rites, and with debauchery and licentiousness. This accounts for the frequent warnings of the apostle in both epistles in regard to such matters. (1 Cor. vi. 15-20; viii. 1-13; x. 1-33.) The apostle mentions as a ground of separation from the unclean, that God had promised to "walk in them and dwell in them," etc. (1 Cor. v. 16.) In order to realise the fulfilment of these promises, he exhorts the Christians at Corinth to cleanse themselves from "all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," etc. This shows what the nature of the separation was—separation from the table and worship of devils in the heathen temples, and from the accompanying obscenities and revelries.

There are altogether three kinds of separation counselled by the apostle to the Christians in Corinth. One was from worship in the temple of the idol, and from its accompanying evils. Another was from all kinds of sinful practices everywhere, which were similar to, or might be suggested by, heathen worship and debaucheries. A third separation was from any called a brother who might be found walking disorderly. (1 Cor. v. 11.) This last kind of separation was simply a church discipline for reclamation, and not with the view of final separation. (See 1 Cor. v. 1-5, compared with 2 Cor. ii. 6-11.) The words, "Come out from among them," etc., are quoted by the apostle from Isaiah li. 11, where they are applied to Israel leaving Babylon, where they had been captives for seventy years, and which was the capital of the great heathen monarchy of Chaldea. In this case the words referred to separation from a heathen country and city, in the case of Israel returning to their native land. There is not the most distant reference to separation from any church, good or bad.

It is absolutely certain that Paul did not counsel the Christians in Corinth to separate from their church, even although in that church there were some who denied the resurrection, and many who were guilty of heathen practices, strife and factiousness. He seems to have had no doubt but the Church was a church of God. (1 Cor. i. 2.) He strongly deprecates divisions or schisms in this church. (1 Cor. xi. 17-19.) And in this he is in line with the other apostles. "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." (Jude 19.) "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be manifest that they were not all of us." (1 John ii. 19.) There are no passages in Scripture that might be regarded as modifying in any way, or toning down, the emphatic warnings against the sin of schism, or seeking to divide or rend the body of Christ. It may thus be seen that candor, and a small amount of care, in studying the sixth chapter of 2 Corinthians would prevent the Brethren from putting such constructions upon parts of it as would contradict the plain teaching of the New Testament with regard to separation from churches.

The Brethren frequently take leave, or find some excuse, to modify or explain away passages of Scripture just as it suits them. They imagine, for instance, that the seventh of the Romans was written by one not yet free. Yet when it suits them they take their chief proof-texts from this very chapter, as, for instance, they try to do in making it appear that the Christian is not under the law as a rule of life. They have not the shadow of a reason for thinking that the apostle was not free when he wrote the Epistle to the Romans. But they evidently dislike this chapter, because it overthrows their foolish idea of no sin being in the "new man."

In the same profane manner they ride rough-shod through the gospels, taking only what suits their whims and fancies, and in the most inexcusable manner rejecting the remainder. They say a great part of the gospels was meant for a "Jewish remnant" only. This is a pure invention. There was nothing meant for the Jew that was not meant for the Gentile. They are both saved in the same way. The ceremonial law was observed in our Lord's time, but He taught plainly that this law was meant to be superseded. But by their unjustifiable theory about the "Jewish remnant," the Brethren get rid of much in the gospels that is opposed to their notions. This circumstance of itself would be quite sufficient to condemn the attitude of the Brethren to the Word of God. They ought to ponder such passages as Revelation xxii. 18, 19, where we are warned against adding to or taking from sacred writ.

The Brethren find plausible excuses for rejecting any part of the Old Testament that they dislike, and for taking whatever they can twist to square with their theories. They are very fond of quoting Job xxii. 21: "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace," etc. They tone this down to make it mean, acquaint thyself with what Christ has done. This favors their conception of an historic faith as a saving one. But they shun like a plague the very next verse: "Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth," etc. They quote about being complete in Christ, wresting the expression as we have just seen; but they never quote about standing complete in all the will of God. (Col. iv. 12.) They say Christ is our model, but they are not fond of pointing out that He says that he who has His commandments and keepeth them is the one that loves Him. They much prefer to think of such love as they think they possess being accepted *instead of the* keeping of any commandments. At this rate the more one loves the less obedience need he render, whereas our Lord meant that the exact opposite would hold true. The Brethren put darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

Space would fail us were we to notice all the misinterpretations of the Brethren. But there is at least one other, a very glaring one, and we cannot pass it without calling attention thereto. It is perhaps a vicious kind of theologizing rather than a species of misinterpretation. We refer to the Brethren's system of typology, which is explained in the next chapter.

## XI.

### PLYMOUTHISM AND SCRIPTURE INTERPRETATION.

(Continued.)

#### THE BRETHREN AND OLD TESTAMENT TYPOLOGY.

A RULE for Scripture interpretation, constantly transgressed by Brethren writers, but approved by all competent Scripture interpreters, is that nothing in the Old Testament ought to be regarded as a type except what the Scriptures themselves direct should be so regarded. (See "Horne's Introduction," Vol. II., p. 530.) Everything connected even with real types is by no means to be regarded also as a type. For instance, the Old Dispensation high priests were types of Christ, but, as we are expressly told, not in everything connected with them. They required to offer for their own sins, and to offer often, and did not abide by reason of death, and in none of these things were they types.

In "C. H. M.'s" "Notes on the Early Books of the Bible," we have a superabundance of types, where there is not a shadow of a reason in the Word itself for finding such. There is a difference between a type and any other person or thing which a writer might, on his own responsibility merely, use as an illustration. For example, one might say that the cave of Adullam is a good illustration of Plymouthism, because in the latter system a number of individuals are gathered together who are discontented with the churches, just as discontented individuals formed part of those gathered to the cave of old. (2 Sam. xxii. 1, 2.) It would be a very different thing, however, to say that God intended the cave of Adullam to be a *type* of Plymouthism.

It can be readily seen what a terrible mess one could make of Scripture interpretation by a vicious system of creating types wherever he pleased. If one wishes the Bible to teach some favorite doctrine of his, he has merely, on this system, to look out for something in the Old Testament which has some analogy or resemblance to what he desires to make the Bible appear to teach, and just call it a type of this doctrine or duty, etc. This is what Mr. Mackintosh actually does. The Bible can be made to teach anything in this fashion, and the teaching will thus be made to appear to have God's authority. This practice is highly culpable and discreditable. Examples shall be adduced further on. All that need be added on the point at present is that the practice is on a par with the Brethren's love of darkness in other directions, and their thus going to the region of types and shadows for light on New Testament

duties and privileges, when there is nothing said about such duties or privileges in the dispensation of light itself, is, to say the least of it, suspicious, even at the first blush, and may remind the reader of what has been already said about the pedlar, and about the Tichborne claimant.

Persons of ordinary intelligence may readily perceive the absolute necessity of there being some distinct limitation as to what ought to be regarded as types in the Old Testament, and the limitation, among proper Bible interpreters, is understood to be, as already noticed, that where Scripture itself intimates in an unmistakable way there is a type, only there should a type be found. Brethren writers make a terrible mess of their attempts at gospel teaching, on account of their ignorance of this important limitation. They wrest, add to, or take from, the Word of God at pleasure, by their illegitimate system of typology, and this they do notwithstanding the terrible denunciations in Scripture itself against its being thus treated. (Deut. iv. 2 ; xii. 32 ; Prov. xxx. 6 ; Rev. xxii. 18, 19.) There are more ways for making the Word of God of no effect than merely by tradition. The Church of Rome adds to, takes from, or modifies, the Word of God at pleasure, through traditions, as the Scribes and Pharisees of old did. The Romish Church also deals in a vicious system of typology. As already noticed, she sees, for instance, in the secession of Jeroboam, a type of the secession of the Protestants at the time of the Reformation. The reproofs of the apostles to those who were misled by false teachers, were mild compared with some of their terrible denunciations of the false teachers themselves who had been the means of misleading them. Through the Brethren's vicious system of typology alone, apart from their many other irrational and prejudiced methods of treating the Bible, Plymouth writers make the Old Testament virtually a book for divination, out of which they fetch, and patch together, what in reality amounts only to a mere parody on the Gospel.

Mr. Mackintosh, as seen from his "Notes on Exodus" already referred to, finds many types where there are none, and treats many other persons and incidents in the Old Testament as if they were types, without himself actually, and in so many words, saying that they are so, thus setting a trap for his readers, as we shall afterwards see the author of "Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment" does, and setting it also so that he himself may not seem to be blamed if his readers are misled and snared. His uninformed readers may thus, as if by a side wind, be brought to receive the author's teaching as if it came to them with divine authority.

Ostensibly the object of Mr. Mackintosh in his Notes is to make Christian duty and privilege plain. But every such duty and privilege ought to be understood to be made plainer in the New Testament than in the Old. This is especially the case with regard to the duties and privileges of Christians in reference to the Church of Christ. The Brethren themselves ought particularly to be of this opinion, since there was, in their view, no Church in the Old Dispen-

sation, and the Church of the New Dispensation was, according to the teaching of the Brethren, "the mystery hid from the foundation of the world." Yet when the exigency of their arguments requires it, they scruple not to deduce Christian duty and privilege in reference to the Church from the supposed teaching of the Old Testament about them, although they themselves thus maintain, when the exigencies of discussion again require it, that there is no teaching about the Church in the Old Testament. When Mr. Mackintosh, in his process of manufacturing types, and unduly pressing real ones, tries to make the Old Testament appear to teach that it is the duty of Christians to "Come out" of the modern churches, he cites New Testament texts, so as to make the whole of what he says seem to have the sanction of New Testament teaching. The New Testament texts quoted by Mr. Mackintosh could not be made of themselves to teach separation from modern churches. Therefore, he takes them away to the region of shadows, where he himself says there is nothing about the Church, and there, by the assistance of an *igneus fatuus* raised by himself in the darkness, sparks of his own kindling, he exhibits the faces of these New Testament texts in distorted shapes, so that they might be pressed into his service. He must darken the room before his seances. He must, like the dishonest pedlar, take his wares to a dark room, ere he ventures to exhibit them and explain their uses. Like the Tichborne claimant already alluded to, he prefers the twilight, and the darkest corner of the room.

There might not be much direct harm in seeing, as Mr. Mackintosh does, in the union of Zipporah with Moses, a type of the union of the Church with Christ, and in the shrinking of this woman from the circumcision of her son, a representation, up till conversion, of the members of the Church from the crucifixion of the flesh. ("Notes on Exodus," p. 77.) Yet even here the vicious system of interpretation already noticed is manifest, and this instance performs its own part in inducing a certain class of this author's readers to believe that types exist where they do not. But when Mr. Mackintosh finds in the command given to Israel to go out of Egypt, a revelation of the divine will to the effect that any true Christians who may still be in the modern churches, should separate from these churches at once, he thus makes the Old Testament counsel and exhort what is directly and emphatically opposed to the letter and spirit of the New Testament with regard to separation from the churches. He devotes several pages of his "Notes on Exodus" to the urging of what he thus erroneously imagines to be the bounden duty of any Christians who may still be among those "who," as he says, "have neither the life of God in their hearts, nor the love of God in their souls, nor the power of the Word in their consciences." (Page 109.) But he it noted, Mr. Mackintosh does not at this point mention the word churches. No. But, in Plymouth style, he sets the trap. He wishes to make his readers responsible for taking him up as meaning the churches. Yet he does mean them, and nothing else. This may be clearly seen from the terms he uses, from his more distinctly expressed opinions a little further on in this

volume, from his views as clearly expressed in his "Papers on the Lord's Second Coming," as well as from the general and emphatic teaching of other Brethren writers on the same subject. Mr. Mackintosh urges Christians to separate from "the dead and powerless profession of the day," and has much more in the same knavish and decoying style. If any one doubts this author's views regarding the modern churches, let him read and study the following paragraph from his "Papers on the Lord's Second Coming," pages 72, 73. Under the heading "Christendom," he writes as follows:—

"What varied thoughts and feelings are awakened in the soul by the very sound of the word 'Christendom.' It is a terrible word. It brings before us that vast mass of baptized profession which calls itself the Church of God, but is not; which calls itself Christianity, but is not. Christendom is a dark and dreadful anomaly. It is neither the one thing nor the other. It is not the Jew or the Gentile, or the Church of God. It is a corrupt, mysterious mixture, a spiritual malformation, the masterpiece of Satan, the corrupter of the truth of God, and the destroyer of the souls of men, a trap, a snare, a stumbling-block, the darkest moral blot in the universe of God. It is corruption of the very best thing, and therefore the very worst of corruptions. It is that thing which Satan has made of Christianity. It is worse by far than Judaism; worse by far than all the darkest forms of Paganism, because it has higher light and richer privileges, makes the very highest profession, and occupies the very loftiest platform. Finally it is that awful apostasy for which is reserved the very heaviest judgment of God—the most bitter dregs in the cup of His righteous wrath."

Such, then, is the opinion of the Brethren about our modern churches. This was certainly not the late Mr. Moody's view, and yet the Brethren will refer to Mr. Moody as on their side. The author of "Accusers of the Brethren" says the Brethren believe in the Church, leaving his readers to imagine if they choose that he means the modern churches. Is this honest? When the Brethren approach church members to wile them away from their churches, is their view of the churches ever mentioned at the outset? No, for they pretend to be in agreement with these members, and will sometimes congratulate them on the correctness of their views. Like the Boers, they sometimes exhibit a false flag of truce that they may deceive and ensnare.

On pages 198, 199 of his "Notes on Exodus," Mr. Mackintosh depicts the spirit and destiny of the modern churches in the most awful terms—terms taken from Scripture and applied there to Babylon. "Egypt expresses what man has made of the world," says this prophet, "Babylon expresses what Satan has made, is making, and will make, of the professing Church." He explains that Egypt stands for unconverted people in the world, and its destiny shall yet be a blessed one, in terms of the nineteenth of Isaiah, 22-25, where it is said Egypt shall be healed. "Very different," he says, "is the close of Babylon's history, whether viewed as a literal history or as a spiritual

system. I will make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water; and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction saith the Lord. (Isa. xiv. 25.) It shall never be inhabited. (Isa. xiii. 20-22.)" Then our attention is directed to the terrible destiny of Babylon as set forth in Revelation xviii. The most terrible parts of this chapter are quoted for us—verse 21, for instance—and applied to the modern churches. "With what immense solemnity," says Mr. Mackintosh, "should these words fall upon the ears of any who are connected with Babylon—that is to say," adds he, "with the false professing Church. Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her plagues."

These are part of the "reserved doctrines," taught to proselytes from the churches as "they can bear it." No wonder that, as Mr. Fenton points out, Brethren will not attend our churches, or church meetings. They will do so only for proselytising purposes. How could they worship in the doomed city, or seek to reform that which they believe the Lord has destined or doomed to awful destruction? And let it be remembered, that Mr. Mackintosh founds these terrible views about the modern churches on his false and prejudiced reading of the types and symbols of the book of Exodus, and he seeks to have Revelation xviii. read in the light of those views. Other New Testament texts are quoted, though misapplied, merely to fortify his position. The main stress is laid on the Old Testament texts. The exhortation to Christians to come out of the modern churches is founded on the command to Israel to go out of Egypt. It may be noticed in passing, that if the command given to Israel to go out of Egypt is to be taken as an illustration, very different from a type, that Christians should quit any particular place, it will apply with some appropriateness to what Christians should do who may be in the Plymouth camp, especially if Babylon has any reference to false and ruinous doctrines, set forth with dissimulation and deceptiveness, as if they were divine teaching; and if it refers also to any organization or body, having pride and vanity, seeking itself to take the place of the Church of Christ, and warring against the true Church. But in any case, it has so come about that the Brethren think that the place where all other Christians believe they can worship God, if only they themselves are in the right spirit, is a place doomed to terrible destruction, fearful to enter.

Founding, therefore, on the command given to Israel to quit Egypt, Mr. Mackintosh calls on Christians in the churches to "come out and be separate." "Satan," he says, "gains his ends by the religion of the world," when he gets a true Christian to accredit it, by his remaining with its professors. It is pointed out that as Jannes and Jambres, the magicians, withstood Moses, so will the false professors in the churches withstand Christians separating themselves. "But if Christians come not out," says this writer, "they are sacrificing the abominations of Egypt," and "making the Lord a party to their doings." They must not "sacrifice in the land," they must put a three days' journey between themselves and false professors in the

churches. They will not be told what, how, or in what spirit, they are to sacrifice, until they first come out. And they must not leave their families behind, nor a single hoof, and they must be very particular that they do not return to Egypt. Neither should they ever imitate Jannes and Jambres, for at best these magicians could themselves imitate only death and uncleanness, in serpents, blood and frogs.

Before this prophet calls upon church-Christians thus to separate, he vouchsafes to them the information as to how a true minister of the Lord is made. He explains that he is not made by colleges, any more than the learning of Egypt had anything to do in fitting Moses for his work. The only fitness Moses received, according to this teacher, was by his having been alone with God in Midian. Similarly, when a man is thus prepared by being alone with God, he can emerge, we are told, with his message, as Gabriel emerged from the divine presence to give a message to Zecharias. If his message be not received, the messenger can "declare judgment with all the sublime dignity of Gabriel who stands in the presence of God, and whose words shall be fulfilled in their season." (Page 84.) So Mr. Mackintosh, after he tells his message about separation from the modern churches, warns those of his readers to whom his message applies, that unless it be acted on straightway, they shall be given over to a reprobate mind.

Such is Mr. Mackintosh's teaching, ostensibly deduced from the Old Testament. The teaching will come home with more authority if the teacher can convince his readers that it is God Himself teaching through types. He further would have his readers infer that he himself has been alone with God, and has come forth with his message of separation from God's own presence. He would have them take no heed to whatever might be said by men of learning, such as the "man-made" ministers of the churches, against his message, for these men might naturally be expected to oppose the servant and message of God's true messenger, just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, and as Pharaoh opposed the Israelites separating themselves. Yet Mr. Mackintosh can announce judgment on all these opposers and imitators of death and uncleanness, with all the "sublime dignity of Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and whose words shall be fulfilled in their season." The Brethren prophets love that particular part of the prophet's role which consists in announcing judgments. So Mr. Mackintosh, after coming out from the presence of Jehovah, announces that those who refuse to receive the message of separation from him, shall be given over immediately to a reprobate mind. The Church of Rome aims at terrifying her ignorant members by such methods also, and she keeps them in ignorance, so that her threats can take all the better effect. Thus, as already noticed, the pagan priests also do. They emerge from the recesses of the heathen temple to announce the message of deliverance, or of doom, to the trembling and expectant multitude outside, it being a message of the one kind or the other, according as these priests would be implicitly obeyed or



not. Let it be added that Mr. Mackintosh will never prevail on thinking people to believe anything else regarding his having received a message from his being alone with God, than that in respect of such message, he is either a wilful impostor or else under strong delusion. God would never give a message of falsehood, for He is a God of truth. Mr. Mackintosh ought to be far more certain that his message is in accordance with the Word of God before he could have the least likelihood of getting any one who knows his Bible to credit him, except through inadvertence. Surely if it be possible for a man to speak even the truth in spiritual things, without that truth having been spiritually sealed on his own heart and conscience, and without his being alone with God in the sense meant by Mr. Mackintosh, no person in the exercise of reason will imagine that a man who perverts the Scripture, and teaches false and ruinous doctrines, can have received a message from God to be delivered to effect such results. Who would say that it is likely that God would give a message to any one who should search the Scriptures, not to see what they really *do* teach, but to discover what they *can be made* to teach for purposes of proselytising, fostering party spirit, and supporting a clique?

#### THE ANCIENT FATHERS AND OLD TESTAMENT TYPOLOGY.

When the Old Testament, in the manner already described, through the creation or the abuse of types, symbols, prophecies, etc., is made to yield whatever meanings, precepts, warnings, the professed expositor thereof may desire, and when the Bible is thus searched to see what it *can be made* to teach, one is reminded of certain methods of Scripture interpretation adopted by several of the ancient church fathers. Origen, who flourished in the third century of our era, was one of these fathers, and one of the most learned and famous of them. He and his school taught that every part of the Scriptures has several meanings, or senses. One sense was the literal, another was for the heavenly world, a third for the inward state of the soul, and a fourth for the Church. There were also other senses. It did not matter much to these fathers whether any particular history given us in the Bible be true or not. The great matter was the hidden sense, which could be equally effective, whether the history be true or fictitious.

Some men, it was taught, were incapable of the contemplation of pure truth. "Let all such persons, therefore," says Philo, a precursor of Origen, "learn those *false* things by which they may be profited, if they are unable to be amended by truth." Origen, as well as many more of the ancient fathers, was enamoured of the doctrine of Ideas taught by the famous heathen philosopher Plato. Thus they believed that everything which can be seen, and which happens in the material world, has its archetype or counterpart in the unseen world. So Origen believed that the death of our Saviour took place in some mystic sense in other worlds besides our own, and that this imparted a benign influence to the destiny of all rational creatures. Its ultimate

effect, he affirmed, would be a universal restoration—even the fallen angels being raised once more to the possession of their long-lost glory and happiness. There is as much probability of Origen being right in this conception as there is of some of the strange predictions made in the eschatology of the Brethren turning out to be true. In the flights of Origen's imagination there is far more benevolence, less of selfishness and exclusiveness, than in the flights of the Brethren's fancy, for the Brethren imagine that our Lord is going to come first only for themselves and those like them. Some of our forefathers professed to be able to tell whether a man had grace or not, from observing the smoke of his fire as it rose from his dwelling. No doubt the benevolent would give a benevolent verdict. We can sometimes better see the state of the heart when fancy works and creates its images with freedom. The faults of Origen's fancy "leaned to virtue's side."

Some of the ancient fathers were as eagle-eyed as Mr. Mackintosh for types and symbols in the Old Testament, and just as ready to create these for the time of need. They did not, however, always deduce the same teaching from the typology, real or manufactured, of the Old Testament, as Mr. Mackintosh does. Clemens Alexandrinus was one of the most famous of the fathers. He was President of the Catechetical School of Alexandria, the ancient capital of Egypt, and Origen was one of his pupils. One of Clemens' favorite maxims was that "the study of philosophy should not only accompany the study of divinity, but should even precede it." There is, of course, nothing bearing directly on the point in the New Testament. But Clemens was not to be balked of his Scripture proof. He therefore carries the matter to the region of types and shadows, and finds what suits him in Abraham's marriage with Hagar. (Gen. xvi. 3.) Abraham represented "a divinely-taught believer in the Gospel." Sarah was "the emblem of Christian wisdom or divinity." Hagar was "the personification of human wisdom or philosophy." Abraham was childless until united to Hagar. This union took place with Sarah's consent, which was meant to teach, says Clemens, "that men may study pagan philosophy with the full consent of Christian theology." "The birth of Isaac (the child of promise) by Sarah was subsequent to the birth of Ishmael by Hagar," and this fact is said to show, "that the men who give their attention to profane as well as sacred studies, are alone capable of becoming spiritual fathers (*i.e.*, whose preaching begets spiritual children) in the Church, their efforts as philosophers being necessary to their success as divines." ("Stromatum," Book I., 333, quoted by Vaughan.) We confess to a preference for at least the *conclusions* of Clemens rather than for some of those of Mr. Mackintosh, with all the shrinking of the latter from a college study, even should such study embrace that of heathen mythology itself, as part of a suitable preparation for the Christian ministry. The emblems which were seen by Clemens in the matrimonial affairs of Abraham, were just as beautiful, and, for that matter, also as

scriptural as those seen by Mr. Mackintosh in the matrimonial matters of Moses.

We are tempted to refer to one more of the ancient fathers, namely, to Cyprian, who was Archbishop of Carthage in the third century. Mr. Mackintosh finds a wonderful amount of types and emblems in connection with Israel's exodus from Egypt. But there is a type seen by Cyprian in connection with the same exodus which has probably escaped even the lynx eye of Mr. Mackintosh. If it has, we venture to commend it to his consideration in view of the next edition of his "Notes on Exodus."

Cyprian held the then common belief that unconverted persons were inhabited by evil spirits. But he sees in the waters of the Red Sea, which were the means of salvation to Israel and destruction to Israel's enemies, a type of the waters of baptism which he believed were the means of destroying the evil spirits, or causing them to flee. He treats of one who begins to doubt whether his baptism had actually such an effect, just in the style in which Brethren writers treat of the man who believes God's testimony about Christ, and afterwards comes to doubt whether he has really true faith. Cyprian says: "Let him be confident, that although the malice of Satan may retain all its power until we come to the water, there all his subtle poison fails, an example of which," says he, "we see in Pharaoh, who by many perfidious delays, was able to resist and prevail for a time until he came to the water where he was conquered and destroyed. But the blessed apostle Paul declares that sea to have been the sacrament of baptism, saying, '*Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*'" And then he adds, "*All these things were figures for us.*" Then he goes on to describe Satan as "lashed, wounded, and tortured" by the preaching of the Gospel, and that "often does he say that he will allow the men of God to go. But in what he says he fails, and practises the same falsehood and obstinate frauds which Pharaoh formerly resorted to. But when the person so possessed is come to the saving water," says Cyprian, "and to the sanctification of baptism, we ought to know and believe that Satan is there conquered. . . . For if scorpions and serpents, who are most powerful in dry places, may retain their power when plunged into water, then *any* wicked spirits (the scorpions and serpents on whom we have power to tread) continue in the body of a man, in whom the Holy Spirit begins to inhabit by baptism and sanctification." Cyprian had no doubt that the Holy Ghost begins to inhabit the baptized man.

Now, although these are strange views, yet there is tenfold more probability of all that Cyprian here says being true than that Mr. Mackintosh is correct when he deduces from the command given to Israel to go out from Egypt, that it is the duty of Christians to separate from the modern churches. When Mr. M. so rigidly interprets all that Israel did as having a spiritual meaning, why does

he speak with such evident horror, as he does in a passage already quoted, about "that vast mass of baptized profession which calls itself the Church of God, but is not"? He ought, with Cyprian, to be a believer in "baptismal regeneration," on the ground that the waters of the Red Sea were typical of the waters of the Christian baptism. (1 Cor. x. 1-3.) But Mr. M. evidently finds in the Old Testament only the types that suit his purpose, and no doubt he will have plausible pretexts for looking for no more, and also for shunning others if they should be found in his path.

Did space permit we might refer to several other Plymouth misinterpretations. They sadly misinterpret about the Second Coming of our Lord, and everything about the Church of Christ. The Jews looked for the Messiah in our Lord's time. The Old Testament prophets pronounced a woe on some who desired the day of the Lord, and predicted that it would be a different day entirely to the day they expected. (See also Mal. iii. 1-3; iv.) It would be far better for the Brethren to give diligence to see to it that they be found of Him without spot, and for this end to relinquish their irrational and unscriptural theories about sin, perfection, faith, assurance, and the moral law, etc.

The Brethren ought also to give up their senseless theory about part of the gospels being intended only for a "Jewish remnant." Our Lord enjoined that whatsoever He had taught should be taught till the end of the world, and the Holy Spirit when He would come was to refresh the memories of the apostles as to what they had been already taught, and without any distinction that we hear of about what had been intended to apply only to a "Jewish remnant."

## XII.

### *CHRIST'S PERSON AND FINISHED WORK.*

IT is of the very greatest importance to us to have scriptural views regarding the Person and finished work of our Lord. The Plymouth Brethren hold several serious errors on these subjects. But it is not the intention here to enter at any great length on a refutation of these errors, as it is desired to reserve some adequate space for the consideration of Plymouth errors that have reference to gospel duties and privileges.

The Brethren believe that our Lord had a "heavenly humanity"—not a humanity like ours. Mr. Kelly, one of the Brethren writers, says: "There are thus three distinct phases of humanity here below—innocent, fallen, holy. Christ's humanity was in the condition of Adam neither before nor after the fall." "As incarnate," says Darby, "He abode alone." "Let us observe," says Mr. Mackintosh, "that between humanity seen in the Lord Jesus and the humanity seen in us, there could be no union." There is much more to the same effect in Brethren writings.

Many heresies agitated the Church of Christ during the first few centuries of her existence. The Arians denied the eternity and Godhead of Christ, and maintained also that He had nothing of man in Him except the flesh, in which the Logos, or Word, spoken of by John was united, which supplied the rest. "This heresy began about 318, and was condemned by the Council of Niceæ, Turkey, which consisted of 318 bishops, and met in 325 A.D. The Arian controversy, however, raged until 381, when the Church Council of Constantinople renewed the condemnation of the heresy; but it was not finally extirpated in the ancient church until about the end of the fifth century. The Apollinarianists of the third and fourth centuries maintained that the Logos occupied in Christ the place of human reason. The Eutychians of the fifth century held that the Incarnation was a deification of nature, even of the human body. They sacrificed the distinction between the two natures of Christ to the unity of His person. There were also early controversies regarding the divine and human wills in our Lord. These controversies occupied years of discussion in the Church, and we are heirs to the precious truths elicited from God's Word during this fertile period. But the Brethren imagine they can settle without even any preparation or special study, as if by a flash from the Holy Spirit, what took the Church centuries of earnest prayer and meditation to settle. And yet the fact is that an average class in one of our Sabbath Schools might

be expected to see clearly the errors that even the Brethren leaders cannot perceive.

The Holy Ghost did not assert that our Lord had not the substance of His mother. "Thou shalt conceive," etc. The capability of being tempted is an attribute of real human nature, and our Lord was tempted. He also hungered, thirsted, felt weariness, sorrow, gladness, etc., just like us, yet without sin. He was made in *all things* like unto His brethren. They had flesh and blood, in which human nature is included, and He "took part of the same." He was made like them, in order, among other reasons, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, and well for us that the Brethren's theory is not true. He could not have atoned had He not been true man. It is another heresy of the Brethren that our Lord did not rise with the same kind of life as that with which He died.

The passage of Scripture on which the Brethren found for the heresy about our Lord's humanity is 1 Corinthians xv. 44: "The first man is of the earth earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven." But this passage is not meant to decide anything about the origin of our Lord's humanity. It refers to His Person. Why not say that His body also was from heaven rather than born of a woman, because it is said "a body hast thou prepared me"? The Docetæ believed He had not a real body, but only an appearance of such. The apostle John evidently aimed at contradicting this heresy. (1 John i. 1, 3; iv. 2; 2 John 7.) He would probably have written also as strongly about the Brethren heresy of the "heavenly humanity."

#### CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS AND IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The Brethren believe and teach that it was only in part of His sufferings on the cross that our Saviour atoned for sin, and that His other sufferings were non-atoning. The sufferings from men were non-atoning they think. Darby says: "They (*i.e.*, evil men) take advantage of God's hand upon the sorrowing One to add to His burden and grief. This is not atonement, but there is 'sin' and 'smiting from God.' Hence we find the sense of sin also (Psalm lxi. 5), though, of course, in the case of Christ, they were not His own personally, but the nation's—in a certain sense we may say ours, but specially the nation's sin. But we have clear proof that they are not atoning sufferings." ("Sufferings of Christ.")

There is no such doctrine taught in Scripture. It is contrary to the teaching of Isaiah liii., and also to the teaching in the Psalms about the sufferings of the Messiah, for in these parts of Scripture His sufferings and sorrows during life are distinctly referred to as vicarious. The Lamb of God bore the sin of the world when John the Baptist made the announcement as certainly as He did on the cross. He bare "our sins in his own body up to the tree." The Brethren imagine that if He had borne sins before the cross-sufferings, God could not have delighted in Him, nor called Him His

beloved Son. This is shocking heresy. The Father never ceased to love and delight in the Son, and were it possible for Him to delight in the Son at any one time more than at another, it would just have been when He hung on the cross, and was bringing His appointed work to a finish.

The Brethren do not believe in imputed righteousness, any more than the Romanists do. Imputation is, indeed, in Scripture, and the Brethren must find some corner for it in their theory. They say therefore that it means "the act of God's mind when He justifies the sinner that believes," and justification, they teach, is no more than pardon. One or two only of them have some glimmering idea that it implies acceptance also. The righteousness of Christ, they say, is never spoken of in the Bible, and the "righteousness of God" means only that God is justified in pardoning the sinner that believes in Jesus. Our Lord did not, the Brethren teach, keep the law in the room and stead of His people, for had He done so they might break the divine commands at pleasure. The Brethren teach further that when God justifies, it is the new creature that is so treated, thereby contradicting the Scripture statement that it is the "ungodly" that are justified (Romans v. 6), and conforming to the Romish idea of justification on account of something imparted or infused, for Christ's sake. Christ, the Brethren say, purchased justification by atonement, but it is through His resurrection that the believer is justified.

Mr. Stanley remarks: "Does Scripture ever say that Christ kept the law for us for justifying righteousness? I am not aware," he adds, "of a single text." . . . Where does it teach that Christ stood in our stead from the cradle to the grave? The Scriptures never use the expression 'the righteousness of Christ,' but always, as in Romans iii. 19, 26, 'the righteousness of God,' . . . to show that He is just in justifying the sinner." ("Justification in the Risen Christ.")

The same writer also says: "God cannot justify anything short of righteousness. God is only righteous in justifying me as a new creature." This is exactly the Romish idea. "Nothing but His resurrection can justify," says the same writer, and he refers to Romans iv. 25. But this text does not teach that He secured our justification by His resurrection. It teaches that He rose on account of that which secures our justification having been completed. He was delivered because of our offences, and rose because of our justification. This is the meaning of the Greek.

Contrary to the teaching of the Brethren, we read of "the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ," that "Christ is made unto us righteousness," that we have a righteousness through "Christ by faith," and that the Lord is our righteousness. The righteousness mentioned in all these passages is the righteousness believers receive through Christ, and yet the Brethren say that there is no mention of the righteousness of Christ! The righteousness of God often means the same thing, namely, the righteousness given us by God through Christ.

Mr. Darby says that the Scriptures never speak of "imputed

righteousness," but of "imputing righteousness." (Darby in Reid.) "But surely," adds Mr. Reid, "if there is 'imputing righteousness,' there must be 'righteousness to impute.'" An examination of Romans iv. will show how false the Brethren's theory of imputation is. If Christ's righteousness is not imputed to the believer, neither is the believer's sins imputed to Christ. (2 Cor. v. 21.)

#### CHRIST FULFILLED THE LAW AS A SUBSTITUTE.

In regarding Christ as not having kept the law during His life in the room and stead of His people, the Brethren are against both reason and Scripture. They do not think properly what is implied in a law having been given to man with a reward for keeping it, and a penalty attached to the breaking of it. Let us illustrate the point. Suppose A had the needful authority, and said to B, "I shall give you a reward if you cross this chasm on this plank, but if you fail you shall undergo the penalty of being crushed and wounded by the fall." If B tried and failed, and suffered the penalty of his fall, would he then be entitled to the promised reward? Surely not. He would be only in the condition in which he had been previously to his having tried, as far as deserving the reward would be concerned. He might be allowed another chance, or he might not. Suppose A had said, "If you succeed I shall give you \$1,000, and if you fail you shall have to give me the same sum." If B failed and paid the forfeit, would he then be entitled to the promised reward? A child may see that he would not, but apparently the Brethren cannot see this principle. If only the penalty be paid, they seem to imagine this entitles to the promised reward. If our Lord had only endured the penalty of His people's transgression, they would not, indeed, be called on to endure that penalty also, but neither would they be entitled to any reward. Before they would be entitled to the reward, He would require to proceed *de novo*, and keep the law without enduring any penalty. But He both kept the law and endured the penalty during the one period of incarnation, and He did both as the Substitute of His people. Believers in Him, therefore, are entitled to escape from the penalty, and also to enjoy the reward. They are both pardoned and accepted for His sake, and this is what is implied in the Scripture doctrine of justification.

The last mentioned doctrine of the Brethren was that of Piscator and his small following, and Baur, the sceptic, rejoiced in its promulgation as the undoing, as he thought, of the whole work of the Reformation.

Christ is the end of the law, we are told, but that end is not penalty, but the keeping of the law. Penalty follows only when the primary end is not fulfilled. He came to do the will of God, and the law of God was in His heart. He did not require to be made under the law in order to undergo a penalty merely. As some one says, He might have accomplished the payment of a penalty had He died in infancy in order to do so. He did not require to be doing the



works of Him that sent Him whilst it was day, be always about His Father's business, and be fulfilling all righteousness, had He come only to endure a penalty. Of course, the Brethren say that He required to do these other things to fit Him for dying, but this is only human theory and speculation. It is not Scripture, nor even reason itself.

## MR. GRANT ON THE ATONEMENT.

But in reference to our Lord's finished work, probably the errors of the Brethren that have the most disastrous results in regard to experimental and practical religion, are their errors in answering the following questions: What is the real meaning and effect of substitution, and for whom did Christ die? On these questions the Brethren are Arminians, whilst they profess to be Calvinists. But the Brethren have neither the talent nor the transparent honesty of the Arminian writers who are outside of Plymouthism.

Some Plymouth writers evidently feel the difficulty of reconciling their views on substitution with reason. If Christ died in the same sense for the whole world as He died for His people, how are all the world not saved? Mr. W. F. Grant, a Plymouth writer of apparent exceptional straightforwardness among his class, writes thus in his work on the Atonement:—

“Propitiation, I repeat, then, is by substitution, and in no other way, and for the people alone for whom the substitution is.”

But seven lines further on he says:

“Propitiation, then, is evidently for no select number merely. It is for the world.”

And here is how Mr. Grant flounders a little further on:—

“The sins of believers were really borne eighteen hundred years ago, but only when men become believers are their sins borne therefor. The very man who to-day believes, and whose sins were borne eighteen hundred years ago, not only could not *say* yesterday that his sins were borne, but they were really *not* borne yesterday, although the work was done eighteen hundred years ago. . . . All this is perfectly simple. It is transparently so indeed” [!]

### XIII.

#### THE SAVING FAITH OF PLYMOUTHISM.

IN beginning to prove that Plymouth faith is wrong, one feels as if commencing to show that black is not white. If a man should be doubtful as to whether or not black may not really be white, he is not likely to be convinced by any discussion on the point. In fact, if a man is already so deficient in perceptive faculty as not to perceive that black is not white, he is not likely to be able to *follow* a discussion on the point. At the same time he might readily imagine the reason of his not being convinced was not that he was deficient in perceptive faculty in regard to the discussion, but that there was no proof that could be given to show that black was not white. The upshot might be, therefore, that he would be more convinced than ever that black was really white.

The Brethren's doctrine of saving faith is at the root of several other errors of their system. But, as already noticed, ordinary members of the Plymouth body, and even some of their preachers themselves, seem entirely unable to understand their own system. There is not a single clergyman, however, nor any ordinarily well-informed member of any of the modern churches, who would not be able to perceive at a glance from the quotations which will be here given, what the nature of the Plymouth faith really is.

Any reader who may require help in seeking thoroughly to apprehend the nature of Plymouth faith, will do well to endeavor to understand and grasp thoroughly the meaning and truth of the two statements which follow :—

#### TWO ILLUSTRATIVE STATEMENTS.

*Statement A.*—The belief of any news, record, or testimony, of any past events, or of things that at present exist, cannot in any way whatever add to, take from, nor alter, these past events, nor things at present existing.

*Statement B.*—No man ought to be asked to believe any news, record, or testimony, which is not true *before* he is asked to believe it, and which will not remain true whether he ever believe it or not.

The truth of Statement B follows, as a matter of course, from the truth of Statement A. Another supplementary statement might be made, but which is really included in Statement A, namely, that when a man believes any particular news, record, or testimony, there is nothing new, either in the man, or in connection with him, by his

belief, except what may be the result of his belief of *what is true*—true, that is to say, according to Statement B, *before* he hears or believes it.

The truth of Statements A and B ought to be self-evident. But were the Brethren able to see their truth, and carry with them a thorough perception of this truth in all they might read or hear of Plymouth teaching, their system would be seen by them to give way at its very base. Probably the Brethren would consent to the truth of the two statements made, but would likely fail in applying them. They would probably lose hold of the statements just when they ought to have them rigidly before their minds.

The errors of the Brethren on this important subject are at the root of several of their other errors. Saving faith, according to the Brethren, consists in merely believing that God speaks the truth when He tells us in His Word that Christ died in the room and stead of sinners. If this doctrine is true, it necessarily follows that every one who believes that the Bible is the Word of God, or tells the truth, is saved, for such a one believes that Christ died for sinners. Surely this is a wide enough door into Christian communion, and yet the Brethren blame the churches for having their door of admission too wide.

#### PAYMENT OF DEBT, OR PARDONING OF SINNERS REMAINING UNSAVED.

One Brother writes as follows: "I look at the testimony of God. There I get absolute certainty. I say God is true. This is faith. It is only to believe. . . . Just as though you had been deeply in debt, and some kind friend had paid the amount, and when this was done had sent you word. The person comes and tells you that your debts are paid and you believe it." (Brethren's tract, entitled "What is Faith?")

Here the teaching is quite explicit. Christ paid your debt. The news that He has done so has been brought you in the Gospel. If you believe this news you are saved.

The following Brethren writer is no less explicit: "Would you speak, or reason, or cavil thus, if, as a poor condemned criminal, Her Majesty . . . sent you a free pardon? Would you cavil about only believing, or would you question her truthfulness by saying, 'Have I nothing to do?' Surely if the Queen's word is her word, God's Word is His Word. And if you could rest on the bare word of the Queen, you must admit that faith can rest on the bare word of God." ("What is the Gospel of God? No. I," by "C. S.")

Let it be noticed in connection with this quotation that the pardoning of a sinner by God is compared to the pardoning of a criminal by the Queen. When the Queen sends a pardon to a criminal, he is free whether he believes the news or not. He would never have to pay any more penalty, *whatever he might believe or not believe* in the matter. It would be very strange for the messenger who came with the Queen's pardon to say to the prisoner, "You are pardoned if you believe it, and if you do not believe it you are not pardoned."

If the Queen sent the pardon, there would be no difficulty in getting the prisoner to believe it. So, also, if the sinner is convinced that God has actually sent him a pardon, he could not but believe it. The question here is: Did God actually send him a free pardon, as the Queen sent the prisoner? If not, there is no warrant for asking him to believe that He did so. News must first be true, before one is asked to believe it, and must be true whether he ever believe it or not. But it is neither in accordance with Scripture nor reason to say that God has sent a free pardon to any one *before* he believes, in the same way as the Queen sent the pardon to the prisoner. Therefore, what the sinner is asked to believe cannot be that God has sent him a free pardon, nor yet that he is pardoned on account of Christ having died, which would amount to the same thing. It is, therefore, misleading and dangerous to teach sinners that God has sent them a free pardon, and to ask them to believe it. The author last quoted, and in the same production writes as follows:—

“Well, Frankey, how much crying and tears would pay your rent?” “Oh, lad, I might cry my een up, but crying would never pay forty pund rent.” “That is true,” said I. “But now, Frankey, if that gentleman who lives at the top of the hill were to pay your rent, and just lift up the door sneck, and say, ‘Frankey, it’s done, I have paid your rent. I knew you were without strength—I have done it, and here is the receipt;’ now, Frankey, what would you do then?” (You should have seen how the old face brightened up.) “Why, lad,” said he, “I should cry for joy, to think he had done such a thing.” “Yes, Frankey, and that is true repentance.”

Here, as in the last quotation, it is taught that Christ has paid the debt of the sinner, and that a receipt is presented to him to that effect before he is asked to believe it, and as the ground for his believing it. The debt has been paid, and will never be exacted again, whether the fact is believed or not. This ought to make it manifest that the illustration is a fallacious and dangerous one, as taken to explain gospel faith in Christ. The belief implied in the illustration would, if explanatory of true saving faith, mean that there must be universal salvation.

According to the Brethren’s way of looking at matters, if the sinner holds a certain view of Christ’s death—that this death was for sinners, or whatever additional views he is asked to hold about Christ’s death—this constitutes saving faith. If he is firmly persuaded that this is so, then this persuasion is true assurance of salvation. The Brethren must be exceedingly short-sighted when they cannot perceive that this is the real nature of their saving faith and assurance.

#### MR. MACKINTOSH’S VIEWS.

The quotations given from Brethren writers are by no means exceptional. They represent general Plymouth doctrine on the subject of faith. Many pages could be filled with similar Plymouth teaching. We shall give a few more quotations from well-known and

acknowledged Brethren authors, so as not to leave any room for doubt as to what the Plymouth teaching actually is with regard to saving faith. The following quotation is from "C.H.M." (Mr. Mackintosh), author of "Notes" on the early books of the Bible, and one of the chief modern Brethren writers. He writes as follows:—

"Is Christ's work finished? Is God's Word true? Yes, verily. Then if I simply trust therein, I am pardoned, justified and accepted. All my sins were laid on Jesus when He was nailed to the accursed tree. Jehovah made them all meet on Him. He bore them, and put them all away, and now He is up in heaven without them. This is enough for me. If the One who stood charged with *all* my guilt is now at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, then clearly there is nothing against me. ("Forgiveness of Sins—What is it?" p. 9.)

Here "C.H.M." regards himself from the view-point of an unsaved sinner coming to exercise faith for salvation. But in this unsaved position he uses language which he would be entitled to use only as a believer. An unsaved sinner has no warrant to use such language of himself.

Several Brethren authors lay the main emphasis on believing the divine record of Christ's finished work. If a sinner believes that record he is saved. They do not ask the sinner to believe first that his debts are paid, as the other writers already quoted do. This more wary class of writers say nothing about the debt being paid or not when they first approach the unsaved sinner. But what they really do say in bidding the sinner believe the record in order to be saved amounts precisely to the same thing in intention and effect as the other writers aim at, namely, the inducing of the unsaved sinner to believe that if he credits the record he is saved.

Here is what Mr. Mackintosh says on the point:—

"Dost thou believe that He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures? If so thou art saved, justified, accepted, complete in Christ."

Surely this is clearly enough expressed. Unusually so, indeed, for a Brethren writer. Any man who is convinced that the Bible is true, is saved, if Mr. Mackintosh is right, for such a man believes everything said in the Bible about Christ. If you believe that God does not tell lies, that the Bible is His Word, and if you know what the Bible says about Christ's finished work, you are "saved, justified, accepted, complete, in Christ." This is terrible teaching. Mr. Mackintosh does not say that the sinner has to believe even that he is invited. If he simply believe the sacred history to be true, this is enough. But even should the sinner believe that he is personally invited to come to the Saviour, it is a commonplace truth that this does not save him. If a man should have word sent him that a house had just been erected 1,000 miles away, and that he was invited to go and live in this house, surely the belief of this news would never place the man inside the house. If a woman should hear that a certain man had made a competency, and if he should make her an

offer of marriage, and if she were fully persuaded of the truth of all this, who in the use of his faculties would ever imagine that her belief of all this would marry her to the man, and would transfer her into the man's dwelling, and entitle her to share his competency. Souls must be married to Christ ere they are in a saved condition, and their belief that He has performed all the work on earth necessary for their spiritual welfare, and that He is inviting them to share the benefits of this work, will never marry them to Him. In order to marriage, spiritual or temporal, there must first be consent on both sides. There is an invitation from the one side and a consenting response on the other. To address sinners in such terms as are calculated to induce them to believe they are married to Christ when they are not, is to commit a grave and ruinous blunder, serious both for teacher and taught.

#### THOUSANDS BELIEVED THE DIVINE RECORD AND YET REMAINED UNSAVED.

We read of many who believed the Divine testimony, and yet were not saved. For instance, in the parable of the sower, those who declined the invitation to the great supper, the man without the wedding garment, the foolish virgins, those who believed but to whom Christ would not trust himself, Judas Iscariot, those Pharisees who were afraid to confess Him, those who will at last say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name," etc., and those the apostle John evidently met with who said they had fellowship with Him, loved Him, etc., who, he says, told falsehoods. There were hundreds and thousands more in apostolic times who believed the record and yet who remained unsaved, just as there are large numbers to-day who so believe, and yet are unsaved, and as there have been also in every generation of the Gospel.

The Brethren ought to know that all the members of the modern churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, believe the record God has given of His Son. Why, then, do the Brethren regard the modern churches as Babylon—veritable synagogues of Satan—in which it would be wrong for them to worship? Mr. Mackintosh, notwithstanding his terrible language about "that vast mass of baptized profession which calls itself the Church of God but is not," yet will not likely find a single member in any of these churches, but believes "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," etc. Why, then, does he not look upon all people who believe this as saved? How is it that he would regard those who would believe the divine record from the Brethren's mouths as saved, and those who believe the same record with equal firmness, whilst they are in the churches, as unsaved? Is it necessary for souls in order to be saved, that they not only believe the record, but that they also believe it from the Brethren's mouths, or at the Brethren's meetings? Many have thought, and with good reason, that the Brethren regard coming out

of the churches and joining the Brethren themselves, to be the same as coming out of Babylon into salvation, even although these members should believe nothing more in the Brethren's meetings than they had believed in the churches. The same kind of belief that would only make church members mere Janneses and Jambreses in the churches, would make them true Christians, "saved, justified, accepted, and complete in Christ" at Brethren's meetings, or in Plymouthism!

The Brethren are of opinion that it is through a sinner believing the record that he is born again. Plymouthism is full of short-cuts. Let us have Mr. Mackintosh's words again. He says:—

"There must be a new nature as well as a new condition, and how is this to be had? By believing God's testimony concerning His Son." ("Notes on Exodus," p. 88.)

In his pamphlet on "Regeneration," the same author says:—

"Now are we the sons of God. He has made us such. He has attached this rare and marvellous privilege to the simple belief of the truth. . . . Take the case of the vilest sinner. . . . Let him heartily believe that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and he there and then and thus becomes a child of God, a thoroughly saved, perfectly justified, and divinely accepted person."

#### MANY BRETHREN MISUNDERSTAND THEIR OWN WRITER'S VIEWS.

These sentences need no further comment than has been already made. Some Brethren may be met with who will deny that the kind of faith here imputed to the Brethren is really their doctrine of faith. This is just in line with what one may often meet with among the ordinary Brethren, namely, ignorance of their own doctrines. Some even of the Plymouth preachers do not know Plymouthism. A Plymouth preacher may be met with who, while denying the doctrine of faith here imputed to the Brethren, will in support of his denial, refer to Plymouth books that unmistakably and explicitly teach the doctrine of faith held by the Plymouth writers quoted. He is unable to read these books properly. And, more marvellous still, the preacher may express his own doctrine of faith in words which clearly imply that he holds the very doctrine that he repudiates. In a public discussion with the present writer lately, one of the Brethren preachers remarked in evident surprise: "Their saving faith is founded on something which has happened in the past! Who said so?" Then he went on to deny that such faith is the faith of the Brethren. Shortly afterwards the following question was put to this preacher: "If A is condemned to lose his life, and B offers to die in his place, and the offer is accepted by the law authorities, will A be free as soon as B has died in his room and stead?" Here was the answer: "A is not free until he believes that B died in his stead." This answer, of course, implies that as soon as A believes that B died in his stead he is free. This is just the faith of Plymouthism. This preacher holds what he repudiates.

## DR. ANDERSON'S VIEWS.

One of the works appealed to by the preacher in question as supporting his contention that the faith of the Brethren is not a mere belief in the divine record of Christ's finished work, is the volume of Dr. Anderson, Barrister-at-Law, England, entitled "The Gospel and its Ministry." It may be mentioned about this author that he is one of the many Brethren writers who flatly contradict themselves. The one-half of Dr. Anderson's chapter on "Faith" is a complete refutation of the other half. This writer first lays down his theory of faith distinctly enough. But afterwards, under pressure evidently from Scripture texts, and from facts of daily observation, he struggles hard to piece on other theories upon his main one. The result is a medley of misstatements, inaccuracies, self-inconsistencies, and flat self-contradictions, which it would be hard to parallel in any sane writer outside the Plymouth body.

Dr. Anderson's main theory of faith, which he first lays down, may be learned from the following quotation made from his book: "Faith cometh by hearing, whether it be faith of the Gospel, or of the news of some temporal calamity. There are not two ways of believing anything. . . . In its first and simplest phase in Scripture, faith is the belief of a record or testimony. It is, secondly, belief in a person; and it has, lastly, the character of trust, which always points to what is future. . . . The redemption of our souls is a fact to us because we believe the record that God has given of His Son. . . . Our faith can admit of no degrees. . . . As far as the act of faith is concerned, the Gospel is believed in the same way as the passing news of the passing hour. . . . Faith, then, in its simplest character is not trust, nor even faith in a person, but belief of a record. . . . The Gospel is not a promise, or a covenant, but a message, a proclamation. It is the good news of God concerning His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. And the belief of that good news is life. . . . Metaphysical distinctions between believing with the head and with the heart are wholly untenable. . . . 'If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.' 'That I am he.' It was this that faith laid hold upon."

Dr. A. thus makes it abundantly plain at the outset of his chapter on "Faith" that he follows in the train of all the Brethren writers on the subject, and regards the faith that saves as a mere belief in the divine record of Christ's death. He deprecates the common idea of trust as saving. He explains that the only way in which we can properly speak of trust in connection with salvation is that we may be said to trust for the final consummation of it. The only difference between the faith that saves, and "the passing news of the passing hour," is in their objects. "Here," says he, "is where the difference lies, not in the character of the faith but in the object of it." Again, he says that "the assertion that faith is a gift, or indeed that it is a distinct entity at all, is sheer error."



There are about as many errors in the quotations made from this author as there are of statements in them. In almost every statement he makes, as quoted, the reverse of what he says is true. According to him the faith that saves is not different from faith "in the passing news of the passing hour." In order to be saved we have simply to believe in the gospel history about Christ. What church member does not believe this history?

Afterwards, however, Dr. A. sneers at miracle-made believers. He ought not so to do, for it matters not, according to him, how a man believes, if he believe at all. Has he not told us that there are not two ways of believing anything? He also admits that the Holy Spirit is required to work faith. He even quotes a number of Scripture passages which intimate that the divine power is necessary to produce faith; such as God drawing souls to Christ, God shining in the heart, revealing the Son, etc. But all these passages are quite inconsistent with the theory that there is no difference between saving faith and "belief of the passing news of the passing hour." It does not require divine power to produce faith in "the passing news of the passing hour." Dr. A., in an appendix on "Faith," tells us that "Every thoughtful person revolts against the idea that eternal blessedness depends upon . . . believing certain facts concerning Him." But this is quite at variance with his own theory. And here is almost the very next statement: "If by faith about Christ be meant the belief of facts concerning Him, to say that this is not connected with salvation is a statement so glaringly false as to need no answer." A little below this he says: "The belief of the facts of Christianity, however great and true, or even of the inspired record of them, can never bring life to a dead soul." Dr. A. ought to confine himself to the kind of place where this kind of pleading may avail, and where he may seek to make the worse appear the better reason. Theology requires a different style of treatment.

Whether one holds the Plymouth view of faith or the opposite, he may find support for his theory from Dr. Anderson. This is probably how the preacher already alluded to was misled. We have written a much longer review of Dr. A.'s inconsistencies, but space forbids its being given here.

#### "GEO. C.'S" ASS ILLUSTRATION.

We cannot pass from the consideration of the saving faith of Plymouthism without noticing one ingenious method of setting a trap for the unwary, which is so common among Plymouth teachers. The author of a tractate largely circulated among and by the Brethren,\* refers his readers to the sacrifice of Christ as illustrated, he thinks, by a pet lamb given by a wealthy man to a poor Israelite to die in room and stead of the Israelite's ass. When the lamb has died in the ass's stead, the priest is represented as saying to the Israelite:

\* "Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment," by "Geo. C."

"You can take home your little colt in safety, no broken neck for it now. The lamb has died in the ass's stead, and consequently the ass goes righteously free, thanks to your friend. Now, poor troubled soul, can't you see in this God's own picture of a sinner's salvation?"

"God's own picture," says he. You must receive it then. He shortly afterwards asks the "troubled soul," whom he supposes himself addressing, whether he believed on the Son of God. The "troubled soul," of course, with the illustration in his mind about the lamb having died for the ass, and the ass "going righteously free," imagines that as the Lamb of God has died for him, he also goes "righteously free," and that his belief of this fact, impressed on him as God's own picture," is faith. So the troubled soul is made to reply that he believes, and his teacher pronounces him as "safe as God can make him." Here the teaching is in substance as follows:—

"Troubled soul, I present you God's own picture" of the way a soul is saved. The lamb died for the ass, and the ass was free. The Lamb of God died for you, "dost thou believe?" "Yes." "Praise God! Saved!"

#### "GEO. C.'s" STATION-MASTER ILLUSTRATION.

A little further on in the last mentioned tractate, the author lets us see again his idea of faith. He supposes three witnesses to come successively and relate the news of the death by accident of the station-master. The first is not a true man, and the second is little better. At length John, a veracious man, testifies to the same accident. Here is what the author says from these materials:—

"But this time you say, 'Now John, since you tell me I believe it.' Again I press my question. . . . 'How do you know that you so confidently believe your friend John?' 'Because of who and what John is,' you reply. 'He never has deceived me, and I don't think he ever will.' Well, then, just in the same way I know that I believe the Gospel, viz., because of the One who brings me the news."

Here it is quite clear that the writer represents the sinner, who is sure that God does not tell lies, as being saved. The Plymouth way of salvation may thus be seen to consist in forming a certain view, or conviction, as to the meaning of what God says about Christ, and as to what that meaning implies for the sinner. Form a certain opinion, and be sure you are right against all-comers, and you have faith and assurance; that is to say, if you are among the Brethren. If an unsaved sinner believes the record, then this sinner, hitherto standing on the outside of Christ's house (Heb. iii. 6), transfers himself to the inside, by his simply believing that the house has been built, and that an inside exists. He has only to believe things are as they are, or have happened as they have happened, and this belief of his will alter the whole of these things, or alter his present relation to them. He is not told even to believe that the inside of the house is offered to him. He has merely to believe that the inside exists, and lo, the thing is done! This is magic run wild. This is, indeed, a short-cut.

We cannot help believing some things when told us, and if we are to be saved by believing what we really cannot help believing, we are saved in spite of ourselves. At this rate it would require supernatural power to *prevent* a man being saved. There is no passage of Scripture that the Brethren quote oftener than the one which says that faith cometh by hearing. If this condition of things is to hold, it will work revolutions in the world. A woman who wants a husband has merely to be told, and believe, that a certain man exists, and, quick as thought, the belief transfers her into the marriage union with him. She does not even require to wait until he offers himself. The sexes would need to refrain in this case from even thinking of each other, or else the very belief of each other's existence would have them married to one another.

James informs us that if we only have the kind of faith the devils have, we cannot be saved. But the devils believe all the witness of God about Christ, and, moreover, they do what the Brethren are not fond of doing—they tremble. Oh, but, say the Brethren, Christ did not die for devils. James knew that as well as the Brethren, and he knew also that that did not invalidate the point of his statement. Many at last will find that they have stayed themselves amiss upon the God of Israel. Many hungry and thirsty ones will find that they had only been dreaming of having been eating and drinking, or have only stood in the presence of the living bread and the living water, but that they have taken nothing, and that now their souls are empty, and dark, and wretched.

#### MR. MACKINTOSH ON THE NEW BIRTH.

One might naturally suppose, that were there no other passage in Scripture to prevent the Brethren from looking so lightly upon the method by which everlasting life is entered on, than the passage, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," it ought to be enough for this purpose. But the Brethren have a short and easy cut for getting through the new birth also. "C. H. M.," in a pamphlet already referred to, "Regeneration: What is it?" first of all discusses the necessity of the new birth, and quotes several Scripture passages on the point. He strongly emphasizes the necessity of regeneration, and "the hopeless ruin of nature." He dwells on the hopelessness of any efforts to improve the "old nature." There must be, he says, the introduction of a new nature. These terms, old and new natures, are used generally by Plymouth writers in a sense neither very rational nor scriptural. But let this pass. But with this exception, what "C. H. M." says about the necessity of the new birth is in accord with the doctrine of the reformed faith on the point. It is, however, somewhat ridiculous for "C. H. M." to emphasize the necessity of regeneration, since he afterwards describes such an easy way of getting through this great change. He tells us that the

means for regeneration are the Spirit and the Word, but when he comes to tell us the particular portions of the Word used to effect this great change, and the part taken by the sinner in connection with these portions, then all the true gold which the writer exhibited at first in his hand, when discussing the necessity of regeneration, vanishes entirely as if by the wave of the magician's wand. The ancient alchemists hoped to discover some process by which the baser metals could be transmuted into gold. "C. H. M.," and his co-religionists, have reversed the hoped-for process, and employ a method by which the pure gold is converted into worthless dross. He describes the new birth as produced by faith, and faith, according to him, is the belief that Christ died for sinners, the kind of faith we have already been describing. On page 11, "C. H. M." quotes some Scripture passages about those who have faith, having also life. Then he says:—

"All these passages go to prove that the only way in which we can get this new and everlasting life is by simply receiving the record concerning Christ. All who receive that record have this new, this eternal life. . . . The truth concerning Christ is the seed of eternal life, and when that truth is believed, life is communicated. Observe, this is what the Word of God declares—it is a matter of divine testimony, not merely of human feeling. We do not get life by *feeling* something in ourselves, but by *believing* something about Christ; and that something we have on the authority of God's eternal Word, the Holy Scriptures. It is well to understand this."

#### PERNICIOUS NATURE OF PLYMOUTH FAITH FURTHER CONSIDERED.

We get life by "believing something about Christ"; as "Geo. C." teaches by his station-master illustration, we get it by believing God's witness-bearing that Christ died for sinners. Believe something about Him—the something, namely, that He died for sinners—and you are born again, "have this new, this eternal life," according to the Brethren's teaching. This is just in line with what we have been already pointing out as their doctrine. Plymouth writers may speak about the new birth, coming to Christ, receiving Him, etc., but they invariably mean by all these expressions, that we are saved if we believe what God says about Christ. A soul-ruining doctrine. Unless a soul has got something better than what this teaching bids him get, he cannot be saved. If the soul that is under such teaching is saved, it is by possession of something more and better than this teaching would direct it to receive. It will be saved, if at all, in spite of, and entirely against, this teaching. But we have no right to assume that this will happen. If a man does not necessarily travel in the true road, even if it be pointed out to him, this does not say that we can expect that he will travel in the true road if a false and deceptive one, leading to a dangerous precipice, is pointed out to him as the true one. The error of the false Galatian teachers was not necessarily ruinous in itself, although it might lead to other

errors ruinous in their nature, yet we know how the apostle writes of the error of these teachers. But this error of the Brethren is in itself ruinous, if a soul that imbibes it is not saved, as we have said, in spite of it, and entirely against it. And if we are to hope for such things, we need not teach anything. There would, indeed, in that case, be no need of a divine revelation of saving truth at all. Like Pelagius, we might think, in that case, that such revelation might be helpful, but by no means necessary. Probably, however, Pelagius himself would agree that error in vitals is dangerous. But let us hope that many of the Brethren are travelling in a better road than their creed would bid them take.

Who can tell how many hungry and thirsty souls will be thus found at last to have been induced to stand in the presence of the provision God has made for them, only dreaming they have eaten and drunken, and will awake at length to find they have taken nothing, and that their souls are empty, and wretched, and miserable. Induce an unsaved one to believe he is saved, and you make him far more difficult to convert than ordinary unsaved ones. Make him further believe that all those who desire to point out to him his error, are blind spiritually, and you bolster him up still more in his delusion. Give him the enemy's work to do in taking his share in seeking to do what certain "gates" are engaged in—pulling down the Church of Christ by stealthy and dishonest policy—and you confirm him in evil principles, just as the Christian increases his talent by putting it to use in the vineyard.

Luther says of certain people :—

"When a thought springs up in their heart which speaks on this wise, 'Verily the doctrine is true, and I believe it that it is so', they imagine immediately that they possess faith. . . . These are they whom Jude in his epistle, verse 8, calls dreamers, who deceive themselves with their own dream."

Before passing from the important subject of saving faith, we desire to describe what we believe to be the true scriptural doctrine on the subject. And we anticipate the strange phenomenon will be witnessed by some of finding that several of the Brethren will agree to our description, not being able to perceive how entirely different it is from the kind of faith set forth in Plymouthism.

#### XIV.

##### THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF SAVING FAITH.

SAVING faith is well defined in the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism. Here it is said that "Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is freely offered to us in the Gospel."

Let it be noticed that, according to this description, in saving faith *Christ himself* is received, and this is something far more than merely believing the record about Him. He is received, moreover, in the capacity in which He is offered in the Gospel, not in any capacity in which a sinner might desire to receive Him. It is a very different thing for a nation to receive a man as an ambassador from another nation, and to receive a man merely as an eminent philosopher, or poet. It is a very different thing for a woman to receive a man to be her husband, and to receive a man merely to be her hired servant. Before a sinner receives Christ, therefore, it behoves him to know the capacity in which Christ is offered to him in the Gospel. The Word of God informs us that Christ is offered to the sinner to be his King, Teacher, Priest, Husband, Friend, Captain, etc. When the sinner, hearing of Christ and this offer, resolves to close with the offer, and when he accordingly accepts of Christ, or, which is the same thing, receives Him as offered, and trusts in Him for all He has promised to do, as well as for the saving efficacy of all He has already done, then the sinner exercises saving faith on Christ, and he is already in possession of the beginning of a life which will never end. After this, Christ helps him by means of His Spirit, Word, the ordinary means of grace, and providences, to work out his own salvation. Christ must continue, for this end, as well as for every other righteous end, to be his King and Teacher. As King, Christ must be admitted to rule according to His own laws and principles revealed in the Gospel, just as a physician that we trust is permitted to treat the body, prescribing medicine, diet, and exercise, according to his own way. Christ must be admitted to rule both without and within. He will do many things in connection with the soul, in which itself will have no active part. But He gives law to the soul also, which it is meant that the soul obeys. Sins and shortcomings confessed, and sought to be forsaken, will be pardoned.

Christ must be on the throne of the heart. Faith crowns Him Lord of all, which is far more—although, of course, it includes, believing the record about Him. The world might be willing to

receive Christ in every other capacity except in that of King. Thousands who at present reject Him, might be willing to receive Him as King in the greater part of their outward conduct, who are not ready to receive Him as such in the will, and in the very seat of the affections. Many thousands would be willing to receive Him were they permitted to modify at discretion His laws and principles of government. Numbers of this class take upon themselves to modify these, or, which practically amounts to the same thing, they imagine that He himself has modified His laws and principles to suit them. This is exactly what the Brethren do in their supposing that the moral law is abrogated for the Christian as a rule of life. But the government will ever remain upon the anointed One's shoulders, and He will ever govern according to the eternal and unalterable laws of His kingdom. Christ, if received for salvation, must be received *as offered*. According to the present economy of salvation, He could not save otherwise. A very great part, indeed, of the salvation which He bestows on the sinner who receives Him, consists in curing him of that very disposition that desires a modification of His eternal laws and principles.

#### THE CARNAL HEART CANNOT RECEIVE CHRIST AS OFFERED.

But to receive Christ as King, Husband, Friend, into the affections, is what the carnal, unrenewed, heart can never do. This heart is enmity against Him. It cannot receive the law at His mouth. It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, says the apostle. Therefore, the great change of the new birth must take place, a new heart must be given, the sinner must be made willing in a day of divine power, ere he will consent to receive Christ in the affections. But the carnal mind itself could not choose but believe the record about Christ, provided it had sufficient evidence for so doing, just as it could not but believe that two and two make four. True reception of Christ really begins where Plymouth faith leaves off. Those who receive Christ in truth are those who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. He that truly believes that Jesus is the Christ, and receives Him as such, is born of God. (1 John v. 1.) The Brethren admit that the power of God is needed to make the sinner believe. But the admission appears to be wrung unwillingly from them. It is inconsistent with their system, and this power, according to their system, has really nothing given it to do. It is, like much else in their system, introduced apparently as a mere figurehead to save appearances.

Many salute Christ, and kiss Him, and make much of Him, when they receive Him in other capacities than that in which He is offered, if reception it may be called. Many could receive Him for some of His "good wares," who care little otherwise for Him, just as some women might consent to marry a man for his money only. For the sake of appearance, and for security, they might also desire to have the man present at the money-wedding. Many would receive Christ

as the "minister of sin," to slay the moral law for them, and thus ease their consciences. They would thank Him and rejoice for His so doing, just as the people of the earth rejoiced when the two witnesses were slain that had tormented them with their testimony. (Rev. xi. 10.) Thus some rejoice in Christ because they imagine He has slain the moral law for them, which had tormented them so much. Following Christ for the loaves and fishes is no new thing.

#### THE NEW BIRTH REQUIRED FOR RECEPTION OF CHRIST.

In the new birth the Holy Spirit creates an affinity in the heart for Christ. There is an affinity between loadstone and steel; but there is none between loadstone and wood. In consequence of this affinity the soul "takes to" Christ. To such a soul it enhances acceptance that this acceptance takes place "in the Beloved." To David the love of God was better and sweeter than even the life he had by it. (Psa. lxxiii. 3.) According to the conception and notions of some, it would be all the same to them, though it were with silver and gold they should be redeemed.

If the eye were a ball of flesh, it could not see, neither can the old stony heart see the moral beauty and glory of Christ, so as to be drawn to Him. There needs to be a new heart created before it can have the kind of vision that is peculiar to true faith. As the eye for seeing, the ear for hearing, a bird for the air, and a fish for water; "as meats for the belly, and the belly for meats," so also there must be an affinity between the soul and the Saviour. True faith shows one a "friend of God," as we are told Abraham was in his faith. (James ii. 23.) This also implies congeniality between the soul and Christ. The stronger the Christian's faith becomes, he rises more and more from the mere spirit of a slave to realize that of a friend. (John xv. 15.) The heart must be broken at the outset before this work can be carried on, before the soul can be moulded by the framework of God's Word. There is a sense in which the Word is God's image written down, if the expression may be permitted. Men are begotten by this Word, through the Holy Spirit giving them true light upon it. Thus they are begotten in the image of God, the image of His moral and spiritual nature. They are created in righteousness and holiness of truth, after the image of Him that created them. They are begotten. When God begets, He does so always in His own image. He might create an object without its being in His own image. Those born again are His workmanship, and will indeed believe that Christ died for sinners, but they will have far more than this in their faith. There are no strange or abnormal births produced by Him. There is no partial birth such as sometimes occurs in nature. There is not the birth of an arm or a leg. Every element in true saving faith is present in the one begotten by God.



## "FLESH AND BLOOD" CAN REVEAL WHAT PLYMOUTH FAITH SEES.

It does not require the new birth to enable one to exercise the faith taught in Plymouthism. It does not require a spiritual revelation of the Son. Flesh and blood can fully reveal all that is to be seen by means of the Plymouth faith. There is no spiritual vision in it. It is only conviction of the truth of certain statements, or news, or record. An old writer says regarding a certain spurious kind of faith, that by it "the great Simon Magus in thee becomes a believer." So by the Plymouth faith the "great Simon Magus" in a man might become a believer. This kind of faith would bring a man to the marriage supper of the Lamb in his own natural apparel. But the tree must first be made good before it can bear the *true* faith. If one imagines he is saved on account of his belief of the record, his natural feelings may, indeed, be stirred for some time, but it will only be a very superficial stirring. It will resemble the melting of the snow on the surface by the shining and heat of the natural sun. This is a very different thing from a real thaw. Some of the outgrowths of natural corruption may be checked for a while after this fancy takes hold on one. But the outgrowths are only lopped off. As Job says, "through the scent of water it will bud again." They will grow all the more luxuriantly in consequence of the pruning. The corruptions will break out again, just as Samson's hair grew again. The boils may be forced in temporarily in one place, but if the system be not properly cleansed, they will break out somewhere else. The boil of worldly pride may, in worldly things, be forced in by circumstances for a time, but it will break out again probably in a spurious and proud spirituality. The *natural* effect of the truth, the striving of the spirit, the power of the sympathy and of the example of a party, slavish fear, natural emotions, may, when combined, go very far indeed in producing a semblance of a true Christian. Yet there is as much difference in what all these influences can effect, and the change effected in the new birth, as there is between water raised by natural heat to the boiling point, and water turned into wine.

## PLYMOUTH FAITH HAS NO APPROPRIATING CAPACITY.

What would prevent a carnal man looking upon faith in a carnal light, and in a legal spirit, as something to be done, or performed, something arbitrarily appointed as a condition of reward? What would prevent such a man regarding faith as a work of law? If a man were told that he would require to perform a number of benevolent acts in the true spirit, in order to have the appropriate reward, he might misconceive the nature of the reward. His imagination might picture it as something very desirable for him, and he might go through the course of benevolent acts, but without doing so in the proper spirit, nor even knowing what the proper spirit was. He would thus look upon the benevolent acts in a legal spirit, never perceiving that it was intended by the very course of action prescribed

to make himself a more moral, kind, benevolent man, to enlarge and confirm these virtues in him. It was intended that he should habituate himself in feeling pity, and should ultimately reap the reward of a more developed moral nature, with all the happiness which this in its own nature is calculated to bring to the individual whose heart is properly toned in this direction. Virtue is said to be its own reward. But if the man misapprehends the nature of the reward, and the kind of effect which the course of benevolent actions is intended to have in preparing him for the reward ; if he should in this condition desire to perform the actions and receive the reward, he would be looking on the actions in a legal spirit. So, notwithstanding the professed abhorrence the Brethren have of the righteousness of the law, or of works, yet they themselves seek righteousness, or the reward, by regarding, and as it were performing, faith as a work of positive, arbitrary law. Their kind of faith has no moral contents, and can lay hold of none such.

If a man were told that a certain road led to a certain city to which he desired to go, it would be meant by inducing him to believe that the road pointed out to him was the real road, that he should travel in that road. But if he should suppose that his hearing of the road, his seeing it, and believing that it was the right one, were all that was required for bringing him into the city by that road, he would not understand the real connection between the road and the city. So the Brethren do not understand the true connection between faith in its appropriating, receiving element, and salvation. Did they do so they would never imagine that merely believing the record secured salvation. True faith has an appropriating element, as a sponge appropriates water. If the sponge does not appropriate water it is useless. Such a sponge, if plunged into water, might be wetted on the outside, but that would be all. So you might plunge a mere historic faith, as it were, into all the statements and news given in the Gospel, and yet it could appropriate nothing. It would be merely like the sponge wetted on the outside. True faith feeds on the bread of life. The faith of Plymouthism is like the belief of children, who imagined that if they were sure their father wrought for bread for them, this belief was enough to support them by the bread. So the Brethren seem to imagine that if they believe that Christ wrought out the work necessary for salvation, this belief is enough to put them in possession of that salvation.

#### THERE ARE BOTH REASON AND INSTINCT IN TRUE FAITH.

Brethren writers often quote the statement that faith comes by hearing, leaving it to be inferred that if one simply believes the news he hears about Christ's death, he has saving faith. But there is more than one kind of hearing mentioned in Scripture. There are those who hear and do not, and those who have ears to hear and hear not. Hearing, believing, and obeying, are often used in the same sense in Scripture, as any one may see who turns up a concordance properly.

The faith which consists in hearing only is not a saving faith. But the statement that faith cometh by hearing, when taken along with the other teaching of the Brethren about this grace, is admirably fitted to lead some readers into a trap, and also to cast the responsibility on themselves if they are caught. As we have seen already, and more than once, this is in characteristic Plymouth style.

"This is the work of God," says our Lord, "that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The meaning of the Greek here is, that ye believe continuously on him. There is a continuous feeding in faith. There are present from the very first running, fighting, laying hold, obeying, submissive, devoted, victorious, elements in saving faith. But it by no means follows that when the sinner comes first to believe in Christ, he has all the elements in his faith fully developed, nor that he is conscious of the existence of these various elements. Yet all the elements are present, notwithstanding, from the very first, and as time passes they will come to manifest themselves more or less in the sphere of consciousness. There is an instinct in true faith, which takes to, accepts, and confides in, Christ. An infant has an instinct which takes to and trusts in its mother. As time goes on the child grows, and by and by it comes to be able to give some reasons for its feeling of trust. But the instinct never dies out. It is nursed and developed by the mother's kindness, and this fact could come to be known and expressed by the child. So it is with the soul that truly believes in Christ. Almost everybody has heard of the woman who, when examined for church membership, said that she could not speak for Christ, but that she could die for Him. She evidently felt the instinct. But it is dutiful for the Christian to seek to advance in knowledge, so that his faith may have a rational as well as an emotional basis. Otherwise there is a possibility of deception.

Trust is present in true faith from the very first, notwithstanding Dr. Anderson's opinion to the contrary. Every soul that expects to be saved by Christ trusts Him for salvation. The Greek words, *pistis* (faith or belief) and *pisteuon* (to believe), are generally used in the New Testament in a sense which implies trust, as well assent to some particular truth. "O ye of little faith" (Matt. vi. 30) was a reproof for mistrust. So also in Matthew xiv. 31; Mark iv. 10. The Syrophenician woman's faith (Matt. xv. 1-28) manifested itself in disbelief of what Christ seemed to have said—disbelief of the news. She trusted in Himself, and He said to her, "O woman, great is thy faith." *Pisteuon* (to believe) is sometimes translated, and means, to commit, and to trust. (John ii. 24; Luke xvi. 11; Rom. iii. 2; Gal. ii. 7; 1 Thess. ii. 4; 1 Tim. i. 11.)

#### THERE IS SELF-SURRENDER IN TRUE FAITH.

There is in saving faith both a trust which is instinctive, and a trust which is more or less deliberate and intentional. This last becomes strong and warrantable in proportion as we have assurance that we have committed our souls to Christ in the true manner. In

faith there is also a self-surrender as well as a reception. There is both a giving and a taking as in marriage. But it is one thing for a Christian to believe and acknowledge that he is not his own, and a different thing for him to realize a true, completed, self-surrender, to realize it in heart and will. This realization is a matter of growth, and requires time. A very young Christian may seek to be fully consecrated at the very first. This is right, and in one sense he may at the outset realize this consecration in some measure. He may acknowledge and remember that he is not his own. But when Christ crosses his will and desires, to realize then complete self-surrender, with complete spontaneity and cheerfulness, as if he had not any will of his own—not to feel any wrench—is not always easy. The spontaneity, continuity, cheerfulness, delight and completeness, with which personal self-surrender is realized, depends upon the purity of heart attained. The pure can see, and love, and yield. Christ told His disciples, and others also, to believe Him for His works' sake, until through His teaching, spirit and providences, they should attain to greater purity, and thus come to believe on Him on higher grounds, such as their perception of His suitability to be their everlasting portion. Those who have not seen physically, and yet have believed, manifest so far a sign of having attained to a greater degree of purity, and consequent spirituality of vision, than those whose faith requires the support of miracle.

A woman might consent to marry a man for whom she did not at first realize so strong a love as she had expected to realize. She might approve of his principles, but through her own shortcomings she might not love these principles sufficiently at first, even though her conscience approved of them. Her heart would be won in proportion as her shortcomings and consequent blindness disappeared. She would, however, recognize and acknowledge, as soon as she gave herself in marriage, that she, *as a matter of fact*, belonged to the man. But she would come to realize *in heart* the truth of her position in proportion as her love to proper principles grew. Whether all this takes place in the case of literal marriages in the circumstances indicated or not, what the illustration points to takes place, we may say always, in the case of the Christian and Christ. The Christian may recognize from first that he belongs, *as a matter of fact*, to Christ; but it is in process of working out his salvation that the truth of his position comes to work itself into his heart and will, and comes into abiding and complete realization there. When his Lord's will, in all circumstances, and however expressed, in Word or providences, comes to be fully recognized and accepted with perfect cheerfulness, his personal sanctification may well be regarded as complete.

If there is self-surrender, committal of the soul, in faith, then the exercise of faith is a matter in which the will is concerned, as well as that there is a belief of the gospel record. The principal part of faith really begins where Plymouth faith stops. If we are thoroughly to understand saving faith we must embrace all therein which the Word of God embraces. This is what is called "prophesying accord-

ing to the proportion of faith." In Scripture, then, we read of the exercise of faith, coming to Christ, receiving Him, submitting to Him, accepting Him, giving one's self to Him, etc. All these expressions mean practically the same thing. There are invitations, entreaties, exhortations, and commands, to believe, or come to, Christ. All this also implies that in believing there is an exercise of the will. We would never think of entreating a man to believe that two and two make four, or to believe certain news. . . . When a man thinks he has sufficient evidence for believing a truth of science, or of history, he cannot but believe it. If he does not think he has sufficient evidence, no amount of entreaties or commands will make him believe it. An entreaty to believe news about some event in the past would be somewhat strange. But an entreaty to give or accept something would not be so. It was our Lord's complaint of old: "Ye will not come unto me," etc., "how often would I . . . and ye would not." In the case of the great supper, there were several invitations issued which were not responded to. Unless there had been the love of other things, presumably the invitations would have in these cases been accepted. An exhortation or entreaty, therefore, is quite appropriate in such cases. But there is not the slightest hint given that those invited did not believe that there was such a thing as a supper provided, nor that they did not believe it was a good and dutiful thing to accept the invitation. What they lacked was the *will*.

#### FAITH AND THE STRAIT-GATE STRUGGLE.

There is often a struggle experienced in coming to Christ. The severity of the struggle will frequently depend on the strength of love in the heart to sin in some form or another. No doubt the Spirit can make the coming easy and pleasant. But for high purposes He often permits the sinner to experience the power of the sin he has cherished. This makes the gate strait. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force. There is a resolving, a choosing, a bracing up of the soul's energies, in consciously coming to Christ. Self-will, love of license, lust, love of the world, make such exercises more or less difficult, or effectually prevent them being successful. Many strive to enter in, but are not able on account of the will-energy having been enfeebled through sin. This is, humanly speaking, the direct cause which prevents them entering in. "How can ye believe who receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not." (John v. 44.) Some may by violence quell sinful desires for the time being, and may brace up the soul, and actually reach Christ, and afterwards their former love of some sins may return on them with some force. But if they have reached Him, these sins will never conquer them entirely. He who overcomes will be crowned from first to last in this matter, and no one else will, no matter what he may, or may not, believe about Christ. Any faith so called which will not reach Christ will be reckoned as unbelief, just as the circumcision of the Jew

who did not do what circumcision was meant to indicate, namely, that he should afterwards keep the law, was reckoned as uncircumcision.

#### THE APOSTLES AND BELIEF OF THE TESTIMONY.

During the period of the incarnation, and also for some time thereafter, it commonly occurred, although not invariably, that those who believed that Jesus was in reality such as He represented himself to be, received Him as such. They savingly believed on Him. There were then two classes—those who believed the testimony about Christ, and those who did not. Because it generally happened that those who received the testimony went further, and received Himself, the apostles set themselves to prove Christ's claims, and to produce belief in the testimony. What appeared to stand in the way of complete self-surrender was unbelief, or doubt, in the testimony. But even before the apostle John fell asleep, he had met with many who said they believed, and had fellowship with God, and loved God, and were saved, and had full assurance, whom he never charges with not believing the testimony, but whose conduct prevented him regarding as true Christians. And to-day countless numbers believe the testimony who are not Christians in the true sense of the term. To say that they do not believe the testimony in the right way is to beg the question. If they do not believe it in the right way, will they be convinced it is true when they hear it from the Brethren? If they assent to all the Brethren say about the truth of the testimony, would they then be believing it in the right and saving way? If they thoroughly believed the truth of all that "Geo. C." means to prove by his station-master illustration, would they be true believers then? It would seem they would, in the Brethren's view. But what kind of belief would they then have that they had not before? None whatever. Very simple people might be cajoled into imagining thus that they were saved by believing in the belief they had before, and then join the Plymouth body. Then the great end would be accomplished.

#### THE UNSAVED SINNER'S DUTY IN REGARD TO FAITH.

But although the mighty power of God is needed to regenerate the soul, and make it willing, in the exercise of true faith, to come to Christ, this does not by any means imply that an unsaved sinner should wait until he is sure this power is exercised ere he believes in, or comes to, Christ. Even when this power is working within him, he may not be able to distinguish it from the workings of his own heart. His duty and privilege are at once to come to Christ as soon as he hears the invitation. If he knows he has come, he can thus also know he has been born again, and if he doubts the former, he will doubt the latter also, and *ought* so to doubt. The great matter is to be willing. If the eye be single, the mind will be full of light. But unless there be a single eye, a willing mind, there will be more or less

darkness as to the way, no matter what explanations are given, or how much light shines round about. We have no warrant to trust Christ unless we have come to him, as a woman has no warrant to trust a certain man to support and defend her as her husband, unless she has *taken him as such*.

Before concluding the important subject of saving faith, let it be noticed that Dr. Anderson's averment, that faith does not admit of degrees, is against both reason and Scripture. It ought to have been plain to Dr. A. that even if faith consisted only of a belief of the divine record about Christ, as he says it does, yet that this belief may be either weak or strong. Even "Geo. C." in his station-master illustration admits this much. An examination of the following passages of Scripture, among others, ought to convince that this faith is capable of degrees: Matt. vi. 30; viii. 10; ix. 29; xv. 28; xvii. 20; Mark iv. 40; Luke xvii. 5; Col. ii. 5; 1 Thess. iii. 10; 2 Thess. i. 3. The Scripture never says that trust grows, but that faith does not. Dr. A. reasons, although incorrectly, from psychology, not from Scripture; and yet none are professedly more against such a process than the Brethren themselves.

The doctrine of election ought never to prevent an unsaved sinner from coming at once to Christ. He is not prevented from attending to the ordinary affairs of life by the conception that God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, or by the thought that he may be called to account before he begins any particular action. So let him keep his common-sense about him, and be willing to come to Christ and embrace Him in the proper time, which is TO-DAY. If he is willing, He can read his election in this willingness. If he is not willing, whom can he blame if he is permitted to have his own way? The longer he remains unwilling, the more firmly will the noxious weeds take root in his heart that will hide the Saviour from his view, and make him still more unwilling to come.

## XV.

### ASSURANCE—GODLY SORROW.

THE Brethren's doctrine of personal assurance of salvation is so well known by all who have any acquaintance with them, that space need not be occupied here by any quotations from Brethren writers on the subject. Some of the Brethren admit that there are some true Christians who do not enjoy assurance. But all the Brethren bid the one who believes the testimony, or record, of Christ's death to be assured of his salvation, whatever he may feel. They distinguish between the enjoyment of salvation and assurance of salvation, as is done, for instance, in "Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment," a tractate already mentioned. When the Brethren writers and teachers get an individual to say that he believes the record of Christ's death, then they direct him to the statement that he that believes is saved, and they bid him have assurance. The usual passage quoted by them in this connection is 1 John v. 13, where it is said: "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." This method of attaining assurance would of itself show what kind of faith the Brethren teach to be saving faith—a kind of faith about which they can say in an instant, "We have done it, it is past, we have performed the act, and are saved." When the soul closes with Christ, it may be often doubtful whether it has, in the midst of its struggle, done this in a saving manner. It may have hopes to-day on the point, and be in doubt to-morrow. It ought, therefore, to go on to make its calling and election sure in a scriptural manner. But once the Plymouth Brother is sure that he believes the record, he is sure he is saved, *whatever he feels.*

### HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE OF ASSURANCE.

If believing in Christ for salvation meant believing the divine record of His death for sinners, then the Brethren's method of getting assurance would be quite a legitimate one. But if saving faith be far more than this, if it be what we have already described it as being, then it will not give assurance to any one although he should be fully convinced that all who *truly* believe are saved, unless he is also convinced that he himself truly believes. Generally speaking, all gospel hearers are already fully convinced that all who truly believe are saved. The Brethren need not trouble themselves so much as



they do with proving this. But what many feel they need is assurance that they themselves have believed in the true manner. Until they have light on this, they cannot have true assurance. The verse usually cited on the point from John's first epistle will give them no light on this point. Neither does any other verse quoted by the Brethren. At the time of the great Protestant Reformation, the question of assurance came to be particularly discussed between the leading reformers and the Roman Catholics. The former maintained, as against the Romish Church, that the sinner is saved by faith alone. This raised the question: What constitutes the essence of faith? The leading reformers contended at first, that the essence of saving faith was personal assurance of salvation. Luther said: "He that hath no assurance of his salvation, vomits faith out." "Assurance of salvation," said Melancthon, "is the discriminating line between heathenism and Christianity." In those times people who were not Christians were regarded as heathens. Both Calvin and Knox held this view at first of the essence of faith. In the Augsburg Confession, in the "Apology for the Augsburg Confession," and in the Heidelberg Catechism (the Catechism used in Scotland previously to the present Shorter Catechism)—all of them principal Standards of the Reformation period—saving faith is said to consist in personal assurance of pardon and acceptance for Christ's sake. In the heat of their struggle, the leading reformers were themselves vouchsafed a high degree of personal assurance. Consequently they were apt to be of opinion that assurance is of the essence of faith. Similar phenomena have often occurred in the history of the Church, and also of individuals. Men have had special feelings stirred in them on special occasions, and consequently came to think that these feelings were those of the normal condition, and they were apt to interpret Scripture in the light of these feelings. But rest from persecution, and from life-and-death struggles, brought a period of more mature reflection to the leading reformers, and they then came to modify their views regarding assurance. Opinions fluctuated somewhat on the question in the reformed churches, as also on some other matters of importance, down to the time of the Westminster Assembly, over 250 years ago. This Assembly published, *inter alia*, its views as to the teaching of Scripture on the subject of personal assurance of salvation. The following is the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith on the subject of "Assurance of Grace and Salvation":

#### THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION ON ASSURANCE.

"Although hypocrites and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God, and the estate of salvation, which hope of theirs shall perish; yet, such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love Him in sincerity, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before Him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in a state of

grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed.

“This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, granted upon a fallible hope, but an infallible assurance of faith, founded on the divine truth of the divine promises of salvation; the inward evidences of those graces unto which the promises are made; the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God, which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.

“This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be a partaker of it. Yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things that are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means attain thereunto. And therefore it is the duty of every one to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure; that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of assurance—so far is it from inclining men to looseness.

“True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted, as by negligence in preserving of it; by falling into some special sin, which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation; by God’s withdrawing the light of His countenance, and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light—yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith; that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of God’s Spirit, this assurance may, in due time, be revived; and by which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.”

Such, then, are the opinions set forth in the Westminster Confession regarding assurance of salvation. Any one desirous of seeing full Scripture proofs for these views may have his desire gratified by consulting the Confession itself. The proofs are too numerous to be quoted here. It would, indeed, be very difficult to improve on the representation made in the Confession of Faith just quoted as to the teaching of the Word of God on the important subject of assurance of salvation. But this teaching is very different from that of the Brethren, especially as to how assurance is to be obtained and retained.

#### HOW TRUE ASSURANCE IS ATTAINED.

There are two kinds of assurance mentioned in Scripture—the assurance of faith (Hebrews x. 22), and the assurance of hope (Hebrews vi. 11). In the assurance of faith there is an acceptance of Christ, but not a *certainty* that this acceptance has taken place. If we have attained the assurance of hope, we are sure that we have believed on Christ, or accepted Him, savingly. The method for

attaining full assurance of hope is set forth in 2 Peter i. 5-10. It is the Holy Spirit that gives true assurance, but He generally employs the co-operation of the Christian himself therein. The manner and method of this co-operation is set forth in the passage just alluded to: "Yea, and for this very cause, adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue, and in your virtue, knowledge; and in your knowledge, temperance; and in your temperance, patience; and in your patience, godliness; and in your godliness, love of the brethren; and in your love of the brethren, love." This is the way, as is pointed out, to "give diligence" to make the Christian's "calling and election sure." This exhortation would be superfluous if every Christian were already assured, and equally superfluous were assurance impossible of attainment. In John viii, 31-37, our Lord announced to the Jews who believed on Him, that if they continued in His Word they would be truly His disciples, and would know the truth in its power experimentally. Through this knowledge they would be made really free from the bondage and slavery of sin. They would run with pleasure in the way of the divine commands, when habitual obedience would have, through the Spirit, enlarged and purified their hearts. They should purify their hearts in obeying the truth, and the purer the better able to see spiritually. If thus purified through the Word which He had spoken, and would yet speak to them, then they would not feel their souls cleaving to the dust, nor to any forms of sin. This would be true freedom—freedom from the holding back, the dragging-down, influences of sin. Their consciences would not accuse them. Perseverance in this conduct would secure the indwelling consciously, the manifestation of the Holy One. (John xiv. 21-24.) Thus is true assurance gained. To get to the Land of Beulah, where the sun never sets, and from which the gates of the celestial city are always in full view, is a high attainment in the Christian religion.

#### ASSURANCE AND THE FURNACE.

A high degree of assurance is frequently obtained as the result of the purity effected by the furnace of affliction. Probably true assurance is seldom, if ever, obtained without the purging of dross by some degree of this kind of fire. (Zechariah xiii. 9; Malachi iii. 1-4; iv. 1-3, and everywhere.) When patience has had her perfect work in the furnace, there is a looking to things which are unseen, a proof of the heart, and a resulting hope that maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart through the Holy Ghost given. (James i. 2-4; Romans v. 2-5.) Therefore Christians are exhorted to glory, to count it "all joy," when they are thus afforded opportunities to have their hearts purified and proved. To the one who overcomes, and in his patience possesses his soul, there will be given, even here, to eat of the tree of life, the hidden manna; and a white stone will be given him, and in it a new name which no one can read or know but himself; and he can read it with ever-

increasing distinctness, in proportion to his faithfulness and patience in duty and trial.

While such is the general teaching of Scripture in reference to the Christian's own part in seeking to give all diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end, yet it must be acknowledged that assurance is sometimes graciously vouchsafed without the conscious operation of any known rules on the part of the Christian. Ere he is aware his soul may be made as the chariot of Amminadab. The Beloved may come into His garden suddenly, and eat with His spouse of His pleasant fruits. Even a weak Christian may have more of this experience for the time being than a stronger one, just as the mother dandles on her knee the weak and delicate child when the more robust ones are allowed to face difficulties by means of their own resources, to develop their strength and hardihood. It is needful that the Christian realize his own weakness, and where the source of his strength lies. Sometimes God speaks comfortably to him before some trial, or particularly difficult or hazardous duty. Our Lord himself heard the heavenly voice at the Jordan ere He met the tempter, and after the temptation angels ministered to Him. The disciples had a time of blessed fellowship with the Master before the dark days which succeeded in connection with the crucifixion. The dominant words in the fellowship were love, joy, and peace. No doubt the fellowship helped to carry them through the dark days; and the trial of these days was required to increase their spiritual receptiveness for Pentecostal blessing, and put them further from that condition in which the world was, of which the Lord had said, "Whom the world cannot receive."

One who truly embraces Christ, and abides in His word, will abide also in the atmosphere of His love, will find His yoke become easier and His burden lighter, and will come to realize a spontaneity and freedom in the exercise of all his religious duties and privileges, and thus attain to assurance of hope. One who accepts of the offer of a master to teach him instrumental music, will at first have scales and exercises appointed him, and will do little else than con them over. He may feel this to be a more or less severe task. His ignorance, want of concentration, the non-attainment of the experienced hand, and of the graceful movements of the accomplished artist, will all be a hindrance to his progress. He is not much inspired at first by the music which he brings from his instrument. But, by persevering practice, the hindrances will by degrees drop out, the sweetness of the music will begin to be heard, the taste developed, the hand becomes dexterous and skilful, and finally there is a spontaneity and freedom attained which makes playing on the instrument a superb pleasure, rather than the routine task it was at first felt to be. This is meant to be an illustration of our Lord's statement: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Practise the truth, and you shall know more and more of the freedom and music thereof. This is the method by which the Christian co-operates with

the Holy Spirit in working out his own salvation from self-will, hatred to divine law, and from every other form of sin, and the method also by which he attains to, and retains, true personal assurance of salvation. But one sin retained in the habit, or in the heart, will mar or destroy assurance, or prevent its being attained.

#### A TRUE BELIEVER MAY HAVE AN UNSPIRITUAL ASSURANCE.

It is quite possible for one who is truly a believer to have an assurance which is not of a chastened, truly spiritual, nor at all of a truly genuine kind, and it may be also much exaggerated and overdone in expression even by him. Job had once an assurance which had unchastened and unspiritual elements in it, and so had Peter, and all the disciples. The fire of the furnace was the remedy in each case. (Job xxvii. 5, 6; xlii. 3-6; Matt. xxvi. 35.) It is comparatively easy for one who does not know the sin and deceitfulness of his own heart—who does not realize the desert and the evil of sin, such as he himself is guilty of, to talk glibly about his assurance. But Christians of experience, who are also spiritually assured, will talk of their assurance in a different strain.

Thomas Goodwin, the Puritan divine, says something somewhere about people who "swallow the gospel whole," just as one swallows a pill. For example, they lean on the promises, but they have never experienced much of their spiritual power. A man might put a box of very sweet and savory ointment in his pocket, closed and sealed up. He might know, as a matter of fact, that the odor of the ointment was sweet, but he might never have himself experienced this sweetness. He has been formally taught that it is sweet, and he has accepted the doctrine. This man has a kind of assurance of being in possession of something valuable. But there is another kind of assurance to which he has not yet attained, and until he attains it, he does not know but he may be after all deceived. An enemy, to prevent him seeking the true box, possibly slipped a false one with all the polish and general outward appearance of the genuine article into his pocket. The enemy also, let us say, scented the box outwardly with very inferior perfume, to add further to the chance of deception. What is really required in such a case is, that the man have the box opened, or broken; then he would personally experience the odor of the real ointment, provided it be such he really has in his pocket. The enemy often tries to give a false faith, and a spurious assurance, and once he succeeds in getting these accepted from his hand, he never seeks to disturb them. So he often permits a spurious faith and assurance to be scented by natural emotions, even to the length of fanaticism.

What is really required to experience the sweetness of the savor of Christ's ointment, is that the heart be broken. The whole-hearted can never have a true assurance. They that are whole need not the physician. The ministrations of a physician in their case would be

like pouring oil on the flinty rock. The true spiritual consolations of God are small with those whose hearts are whole.

Those who do not mourn for sin cannot be comforted. The Brethren will allow a little mourning before the soul believes the record, but they then hurry the one who does so believe away from mourning for sin as from a deadly plague. The short snap of sorrow they allow, would appear to be permitted for the sake of appearances, as several other parts of their creed are tolerated. But none can truly and continuously rejoice except those who also mourn. None can really sing the song, "To Him that loved us, and loosed us from our sins," etc., except those who have mourned for sin all their Christian lives. "Sorrowful yet always rejoicing." Some there are who prevent tears by carnal shifts, or dry up themselves the few drops that come, before God wipes them away. It is as impossible for the gracious soul not to mourn for sin in itself as it is for the eye not to water when the ball thereof is roughly struck. Were it a ball of flesh this watering would not occur. So the carnal heart, if it takes to do with what it imagines to be Christianity, is easily made to fall in with the idea that it need not mourn, for it would find true mourning rather difficult.

#### THE DANGEROUS NATURE OF FALSE ASSURANCE.

To induce a man whilst in his carnal state to imagine he is saved, is to do him an unspeakably great injury. He has not, in his unrenewed state, anything internally to help him to discover his real condition, and in his false assurance he sets himself, as the Pharisees of old, against everything from without that would aim at convincing him on this point. His conscience is drugged by ruinous opiates. The Brethren frequently compare the modern churches to the ancient Church of Laodicea, because this church was lukewarm. But they never seem to entertain the thought for an instant that they themselves might be exactly like this ancient church in her imagining she was rich and increased with goods, having need of nothing, not knowing that she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. There may be a fire of assurance in the heart which is not of the Lord's kindling, but a strange fire. The Pharisee in the temple, who thanked God that he was not as other men are, had heat of this kind. The Lord approved more of the state of heart of him who smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me the sinner." Let any one who wishes to understand the Brethren's kind of assurance, and see it expressed, read their hymns. There are some, says Goodwin, who profess to be treading the narrow way, who never came in at the strait gate. Bunyan says something of the same kind. Formality and hypocrisy can profess to travel in this way, as long as they can make short and easy cuts when they come to hills of difficulty, skip the moral law and practical holiness. Bunyan speaks of the pilgrim's coming at length to the Land of Beulah, in which the sun never sets, and from which the gates of the celestial city could

always be seen. The arriving at this land betokens a considerable advance in the Christian life. But it is to be feared that it is not the true Sun of Righteousness that shines in the Brethren's Land of Beulah, but sparks of their own kindling, unless, indeed, they be considerably better than their creed. But if at the end they be found to have walked in the light of their own fire, and of the sparks they have kindled, this shall they have at the hand of the Lord, they shall lie down in sorrow. (Isa. li. 11.) Sometimes even Christians have been known to imagine themselves reigning as kings, owing to sparks of their own kindling operating in the imagination. (1 Cor. iv. 8.)

#### DR. HORATIUS BONAR ON A SPURIOUS ASSURANCE.

It is said that some of the Brethren are much enamoured of the opinions of the late Dr. Horatius Bonar. It is to be feared, however, that they are too often enamoured of what they have not taken sufficient pains to learn much about. It would be in many respects a revelation to the Brethren, if they were to read and carefully study some of this author's works, as, for instance, "Truth and Error," and "God's Way of Holiness." Dr. Bonar in these works does not name the Plymouth Brethren, but he surely must have had them in view in much that he writes. Let a few quotations be made from "Truth and Error":—

"Never attempt, I beseech you, my dear friend, to make faith simple, with the view of getting rid of the need of the Spirit to produce it. This, I believe, is one of the wretched devices of Satan in the present day. . . . This, I believe, is the aim of the propagators of the new theology. Their object in simplifying faith is to bring it within the reach of the unrenewed man, so that by performing this very simple act, he may become a renewed man. . . . The doctrine of assurance is stated and pressed by many of them in the most arrogant and offensive way; so much so indeed, that the word has become a suspicious one. They make a god of their assurance, and condemn with the utmost flippancy and ease every one who does not come up to their standard of assurance. Just *say* that you believe, say that you are perfectly assured of your salvation—join the sect, and this will cover many defects which others would not consent to overlook. I have been often both amazed and shocked at the vain-glorious boastings of assurance, and the contemptuous condemnation of others, which are indulged in. Ah, it is easy to speak of assurance, to boast of it, to despise others for not having it; but it is not so easy to walk humbly with our God. And I have seen such pride, such unmeekness, such boasting, such sectarianism, such censoriousness, such evil speaking, in connection with this pretended assurance, that I could not help coming to the conclusion, that the man who could boast of his assurance while indulging in such tempers, was deceiving himself or others most grossly, and had no title to the name of Christian at all. I am not prepared to deny the name of Christian to men, simply because they hold much that I conceive to be

error; but I am quite prepared to deny the name of Christian to the proud, the censorious, the uncharitable boasters of their assurance."

"The doctrine of assurance is made wholly to rest upon the doctrine that Christ died for all in the most universal sense. It is maintained that there can be no assurance if this be not its foundation. 'Christ died for me' is that which every sinner is called upon to believe, yet it is maintained at the same time that Christ did not die for any so as actually to *secure* salvation for them, but merely to make it possible for them. And to believe that Christ died so as to make salvation possible for me, is all I need to believe in order to have assurance; . . . but just in proportion as I would prize and preach the true doctrine of 'assurance of God's love' and 'peace of conscience,' according to the words of our Catechism, in that very proportion would I condemn, and warn you against, the flippant, boastful assurance of our day. Peace with God is the most humbling, solemnizing and sanctifying of all truths. And when I see no such fruits brought forth by those who speak of it so loudly, I would beseech you to be upon your guard, lest the peace into which you may thus be led be the peace of a seared conscience, or the peace of a hard heart, or the peace of the devil, or the peace of the fancy, or of the flesh. . . . We have men reckless and headstrong in their innovations; rushing from doctrine to doctrine, in the feverish love of change; rash in judgment, and shallow in intellect; despising creeds, confessions, catechisms, and old divinity of every kind; setting themselves up as those who alone preach or know the Gospel—the people with whom alone wisdom can be supposed to exist, and with whom it is almost certain to die. . . . They are very censorious. A great part of their religion appears to consist in judging others, and pretending to determine their spiritual state. They talk flippantly about conversion, and seem to have no difficulty in settling who are converted and who are not, by some peculiar tests of their own. Those who have a single doubt, or who shrink from their language of assurance, are pronounced to be on the way to hell. They will have it that nobody preaches a free gospel but themselves, and that it is scarcely possible to hear the Gospel out of their meeting-place, or beyond their sect. Their self-confidence is amazing. . . . I see careless men taking an easy way of getting to heaven by saying that they believe; and making their own confidence their Saviour. No wrestling with flesh and blood, or with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places. I see troubled souls saying peace to themselves when there is no peace, by resolving to be quite sure that all is well with them, though their hurt be not healed, but only skinned over, and their conscience remains unpurged by the blood of sprinkling. I see men intent upon widening the strait gate and the narrow way, making what they call faith a substitute for everything, superseding conviction, repentance, self-abasement, by their own act of faith, counting it bondage to be strict in Sabbath observance; nay, some are



already denying the authority of the Sabbath. I find men holding the doctrine of 'perfection,' . . . yet censorious, proud, uncharitable, sectarian. I see men mistaking indifference to sin and ignorance of their own deceitful hearts for holiness,—making a merit of not mourning for sin, as if it were unsuitable for one who is forgiven,—not seeking for pardon, nor confessing sin in their prayers,—thus combining the vileness of Antinomianism with the mock-sanctity of perfectionism."

Then Dr. Bonar in a footnote quotes the Puritan divine, Dr. John Owen, as follows :

"Others who have found out a new way to it (*i.e.*, to perfection) by denying original indwelling sin, and attempering the spirituality of the law of God unto men's carnal hearts, as they have sufficiently discovered themselves to be ignorant of the life of Christ and the power of it in believers, so they have invented a new righteousness that the Gospel knows not of, being vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds." (Owen "On the Mortification of Sin.")

No one who knows the Brethren can entertain any doubt it was of them Dr. Bonar thus wrote. The Brethren ought to ponder his words. They are weighty and instructive.

We very frequently find in Brethren writings exhortations to those who believe the divine testimony about Christ's death, to be assured of their salvation whatever the state of their feelings may be. The very title of the tractate, "Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment," reveals the Brethren's view on this point. Safety they urge the historic believer to be sure of, whether he have "Enjoyment" or not. This position could be occupied only by those who have that kind of belief for saving faith which we have already described as the faith of the Brethren. Often, often, do the Brethren urge their peculiar kind of believer to be assured in spite of his feelings. Their kind of faith and assurance are very easily obtained by the unrenewed heart. Mr. Mackintosh refers to Pharaoh urging the Israelites to sacrifice in the land, and not go far away. It looks as if the Brethren had really complied with a similar advice. Let one or two paragraphs be quoted from Jonathan Edwards regarding assurance in the absence of feeling, and regarding other matters which it would be well for the Brethren thoroughly to study. In his "Religious Affections," Principal Edwards writes as follows :—

#### JONATHAN EDWARDS ON FALSE ASSURANCE.

"When once a hypocrite is thus established in a false hope, he has not those things to cause him to call his hope in question, that oftentimes are the occasion of doubting in true saints ; as, first, he has not that cautious spirit, that great sense of vast importance of a sure foundation, and that dread of being deceived. The comforts of true saints increase a wakening and caution, and a lively sense of how great a thing it is to appear before an infinitely holy and omniscient judge. But false comforts put an end to these things and dreadfully stupefy

the mind. Secondly, the hypocrite has not the knowledge of his own blindness, and the deceitfulness of his own heart, and that mean opinion of his own understanding, that the true saint has. Those that are deluded with false discoveries and affections are evermore highly conceited of their light and understanding. Thirdly, the devil does not assault the hope of the hypocrite as he does the hope of a true saint. The devil is a great enemy to a true Christian hope, not only because it tends greatly to the comfort of him that hath it, but also because it is of a holy, heavenly nature, greatly tending to promote and cherish grace in the heart and a great incentive to strictness and diligence in the Christian life. But he is no enemy to the hope of a hypocrite which above all things establishes his interest in him. A hypocrite may retain his hope without opposition as long as he lives, the devil never disturbing nor attempting it. But there is perhaps no true Christian but has his hope assaulted by him. . . . Fourthly, he who has a false hope has not that sight of his own corruptions which the saint has. . . . But a false hope hides corruption, covers it all over, and the hypocrite looks clean and bright in his own eyes."

Principal Edwards then goes on to refer to Shepard's two kinds of hypocrites—the legal and the evangelical, and the latter as the worse—one of whom, says Edwards, "I have scarcely known in my life that has been undeceived." Afterwards he says that their confidence "is like the confidence of some mad men, who think they are kings; they will maintain it against all reason and evidence. And in one sense it is much more immovable than a truly gracious assurance. A true assurance is not upheld but by the soul being kept in a holy frame, and grace maintained in lively exercise. If the actings of grace do much decay in the Christian and he falls into a lifeless frame, he loses his assurance. But this confidence of hypocrites will not be shaken by sin; they, at least some of them, will maintain their boldness in their hope in the most corrupt frames and wicked ways, which is sure evidence of their delusion."

The writer then refers in a footnote to the words of Dr. Amos, namely, "that the peace of a wicked man may be distinguished from the peace of a godly man," inasmuch as "that the peace of a wicked man continues, whether he performs the duties of piety and righteousness or not, provided those crimes are avoided that appear horrid to nature itself." Then J. Edwards goes on as follows:—

"And here I cannot but observe that there are certain doctrines often preached to the people, which need to be delivered with more caution and explanation than they frequently are; for as they are by many understood, they tend greatly to establish this delusion and false confidence of hypocrites. The doctrines I speak of are those of Christians living by faith, not by sight; their giving glory to God by trusting Him in the dark; living upon Christ, and not upon experiences, not making their good frames the foundation of their faith, which are excellent and important doctrines, indeed, rightly understood, but corrupt and destructive as many understand them. The Scripture speaks of living or walking by faith in no other way than

these, namely, a being governed by a respect to eternal things, which are the objects of faith, and are not seen, and not by a respect to temporal things, which are seen, and believing things revealed that we never saw with bodily eyes, and also living by faith in the promise of future things, without yet seeing or enjoying the things promised, or knowing the way how they can be fulfilled. This will be evident to any one that looks over the Scriptures which speak of faith in opposition to sight: 2 Cor. iv. 18; v. 7; Heb. xi. 1, 13, 17, 27, 29; Rom. viii. 24; John xx. 29. But this doctrine, as it is understood by many, is that Christians ought to firmly believe and trust in Christ, without spiritual light or sight, and although they are in a dark, dead frame, and for the present have no spiritual experiences or discoveries. And it is truly the duty of those who are thus in darkness, to come out of darkness into light and believe. But that they should confidently believe and trust while they yet remain without spiritual light or sight, is an antisciptural and absurd doctrine. The Scripture is ignorant of any such faith in Christ of the operation of God, that is not founded in a spiritual sight of Christ. . . . That faith which is without spiritual light, is not the faith of the children of light and of the day, but the presumption of the children of darkness. And therefore to press and urge men to believe, without any spiritual light or sight, tends greatly to help forward the delusions of the prince of darkness. . . . Nor can they have any trust in God any further than they are in a gracious frame. They that are in a dead carnal frame ought doubtless to trust in God, because that would be the same thing as coming out of their bad frame and turning to God, but to exhort men confidently to trust in God, and so hold up their hope and peace, though they are not in a gracious frame, is the same thing in effect as to exhort them confidently to trust in God, but not with a gracious trust. And what is that but a wicked presumption? It is just as impossible for men to have a strong or lively trust in God, when they have no lively exercise of grace, or sensible Christian experiences, as it is for them to be in the lively exercise of grace without the exercise of grace."

"Those that insist on persons living by faith when they have no experience, and are in very bad frames, are also very absurd in their notions of faith. What they mean by faith is believing that they are in a good estate. Hence they count it a dreadful sin for them to doubt their state, whatever frames they are in, and whatever wicked things they do, because it is the great and heinous sin of unbelief; and he is the best man, and puts most honor upon God, as they erroneously imagine, that maintains his hope of his good estate the most confidently and immovably, when he has the least light of experience; that is to say, when he is in the worst and wickedest frame, because, forsooth, that is a sign that he is strong in the faith, giving glory to God, and against hope believes in hope. But out of what Bible do they learn this notion of faith, that it is in a man's confidently believing that he is in a good estate? If this be faith, the Pharisees had faith in an eminent degree, some of whom, Christ

teaches, committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. To suppose that faith consists in believing that they are in a good estate, is in effect the same thing as to suppose that faith consists in a person believing that he has faith, or in believing that he believes."

#### BELIEVING IN ONE'S OWN BELIEF.

Jonathan Edwards wrote shortly before the rise of the Brethren, but not before their heresies were known, for the spurious faith and assurance described by him are old heresies, but are also those which the Brethren have imbibed and thrive upon. There is no room for doubt, whether the Brethren are able to see it or not, that their faith is just the believing that they already believe, and this is their assurance also. When they urge so much that the testimony of God must be true, which no gospel hearer ever doubts, what is this but seeking to make men believe that if they believe that this is faith, they are saved? that is, they are saved if they believe in their own belief of the divine testimony. What does any gospel hearer learn from the Brethren's speaking of God himself as witness, etc., as, for instance, the author of "Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment" does in his station-master illustration, and, indeed, all the Brethren who treat of the subject? What do people learn from this that they did not know before, except that the unwary of the Brethren readers will now fancy that this, which they had before, is saving faith? And this is neither more nor less than their coming to imagine that the belief they have always had is saving faith, or, in other words, coming to believe in their own belief.

There are no religionists who, more than the Brethren, urge people to have assurance who believe the divine testimony, whatever they may experience, whatever the state of their feelings. Mr. Mackintosh's notes are full of this teaching. So is "Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment." Take a sentence or two from this latter work, as it is so well known among the Brethren. The writer says:—

"Now do you see your mistake? You have been mixing up enjoyment with your safety—two widely different things. When through self-indulgence, loss of temper, worldliness, etc., you grieved the Holy Spirit and lost your joy, you thought your safety was undermined. But again I repeat it, your safety hangs upon Christ's work for you; your assurance upon God's word to you. . . . When your heart is thus all unrest, need I ask, Has Christ's work changed? No, no. Then your salvation has not altered. Has God's word changed? Surely not. Then the certainty of your salvation has received no shock." There is much more to the same effect.

Here it will be plain to every attentive reader, although we do not expect it will be so to the Brethren, that the writer is urging confidence and trust whatever be the state of the feelings or experience. No matter what the "self-indulgence, temper, worldliness," etc., the one thus guilty was wrong in imagining that "his safety was undermined." In other words, he was exhorted to be assured of that

safety, no matter what he felt or internally experienced. As long as God's Word stood firm, he was safe whatever he felt. Now, who is he that is thus exhorted to be assured of his salvation? He is the one who believes that God speaks the truth in His Word, as the station-master illustration teaches. The promises of God, to which the writer refers, are made to those only who are in the condition of believing. But how is a man to know that he is in that condition, if all internal experiences of the effects of believing are absent? If he thought he once had these experiences, but they are now all away, and through sin getting the upper hand, how is he to know that he had not been deceived by his previous experiences? But the fact is, that the Brethren do not once tell the man to look back on previous experiences as the ground of his thinking that he might have been brought to the Saviour. According to them, no matter what experiences he has now, or ever had, he is to assure himself when he has nothing of the kind, and whatever his conduct. And he is bidden assure himself eternally by this, namely, that the Word of God is eternally true. Now, it ought to be very clear that any man who can believe that the Word of God is eternally true, can assure himself of his salvation according to the teaching of the Brethren, no matter what his conduct, spiritual sight, or feelings may be. It is very marvellous how unable the Brethren are to see the real nature of their doctrines of faith and assurance. As we have said, the promises of God are made to those only who believe, and unless a man is sure he believes, however sure he may be that God's Word is true, this will not give him true assurance. And God does not tell any man by His Word whether he believes or not. It is, indeed, true that the Christian is in a saved state, even when he does not realize the fact. But we are at present treating of his personal assurance of being in a saved state, which is a very different thing, and this assurance can never be had by him by his simply believing that the promises of God are true, unless he is assured he is among those to whom the promises are made, and this God does not tell him in His Word. Another Brother writes as follows:—

"If I could only *feel* it," as a young officer said to me, when I pressed on him the question that enough had been done on the cross to save his soul. "But," I said, "you have not got to *feel* it but *believe* it. You may be saved without feeling. I believed in Christ for a fortnight before I knew I was saved. I might have known it at once, only I was waiting to feel saved." At last I said, "Well, if I don't feel saved until I find myself in heaven, still I'll rest solely on the Word of God." Then Satan whispered, "Do you feel that you have everlasting life?" I could not say I felt it. "Then you cannot have it," whispered the arch-liar, etc., etc. ("Faith or Feeling: Which?" Pages 3, 4.)

Now this writer ("T. W. T.," as he signs himself) tells us he was saved for a fortnight without knowing it, because he had been looking for the experienced effects of salvation, and had felt none. Neither does he say that he came to experience any of these effects

afterwards, when he came to have assurance. How, then, did he come to have assurance? Not by God's telling him he was saved, or was a true believer, for God does not, in His Word, tell any man *that*. Was it by his feeling he was a believer? He tells us expressly that it was not. How, then? He neither felt it, nor did God tell it to him, and yet he was fully assured. This assurance came from his being sure that he believed that God's Word is true, and no lie. And yet God's Word said nothing to him specially that it does not say to every sinner, and countless numbers are as sure that God speaks the truth in His Word as he is, who are nevertheless not saved, and who have far more common sense than to believe that such a kind of belief in their own belief would save them. In fact, countless numbers who believe the record, but who know that such belief does not of itself save, are much nearer salvation, than this writer, unless he has something better than he says he has.

It is, indeed, true, as need hardly be said, that the unsaved sinner ought to accept Christ as he is, and should on no account wait for feeling before so doing. But that is a very different thing from saying that he ought to feel assured of his salvation without evidence of any kind that he has really accepted Christ in the true way, or that he has done anything else than believe the divine testimony to be true, which probably he never doubted. And he would walk straight into the ruinous trap of Plymouth faith if he, whilst thinking of these things, should come to imagine that the kind of faith he had had all along was saving faith. If the way of obtaining assurance set forth by "T. W. T." were to be commonly adopted, countless numbers could say that they had been saved, not merely for a fortnight without their knowing it, but saved also for years, all their life-time indeed, without their being aware of it. And thousands will live and die without their once imagining they are saved, and yet be perfectly secure notwithstanding. Could there be any way better calculated for ruining souls than this?—making them believe they are saved if only they are sure they believe that the Bible is true, for if they believe this it embraces all the faith of Plymouthism.

#### EDWARDS, SHEPARD, AND STODDARD.

"If this word which God speaks is true, then I am saved," says the Plymouth Brother. Yes, he is saved if he knows he is in the condition to which that word applies. Let us hear Jonathan Edwards again on this point. He says:—

"There are propositions to be found in the Bible, declaring that persons of such and such qualifications are forgiven and beloved of God; and therefore, when any person is comforted and affected by any such proposition, it is by another word, a word newly coined, and not any word of God contained in the Bible. And thus many persons are vainly affected and deluded." Then Edwards quotes Shepard as follows: "There is yet no word giving assurance but that which is made to some work, 'He that believeth, or is poor in spirit,' etc.,

and until that work is seen, he has no assurance from that promise." And from Stoddard's "Nature of Saving Conversion," Edwards quotes the following: "If God should tell a saint that he has grace, he might know it by believing the Word of God; but it is not in this way that godly men do know that they have grace; it is not revealed in the Word."

We shall quote Jonathan Edwards again on the subject in hand. He says in the work already mentioned:—

"They therefore directly thwart God's wise and gracious constitution of things, who exhort others to be confident in their hopes, when in dead frames; under a notion of living by faith, and not by sight, and trusting God in the dark, and living upon Christ, and not upon their experiences; and warn them not to doubt of their good estate, lest they should be guilty of the dreadful sin of unbelief. And it has a direct tendency to establish the most presumptuous hypocrites, and to prevent their ever calling their state in question, how much soever wickedness rages, and reigns in their hearts, and prevails in their lives; under a notion of honoring God by hoping against hope, and confidently trusting in God when things look very dark. And doubtless vast has been the mischief that has been done in this way."

There is little doubt but the Brethren, or at least many of them, will have a hundred and one excuses for not facing these quotations properly. Some would despatch the whole easily by merely saying that the whole is the teaching of man, as if their own teaching were far above that of man. They ought to consider patiently, and see whether it be not the teaching of God's Word also. Some will say they agree with it all, not perceiving that it is diametrically opposed to Plymouth teaching. It is likely in any case that, as a rule, they will be resolved not to be convinced. If any of the Brethren resemble those of whom the distinguished author just quoted writes in the following sentences, there is very little hope of their conviction by anything that could be said by one outside their own persuasion. Principal Edwards says:—

"Nor is there much encouragement in the experience of past or present times, to lay down rules or marks to distinguish between true and false affections, in hope of convincing any considerable number of such hypocrites, as have been deceived with great false discoveries and affections, and are once settled in a false confidence and high conceit of their own supposed great experiences and privileges. Such hypocrites are so conceited of their own wisdom, and so blinded and hardened with a very great self-righteousness (but very subtle and secret, under the disguise of great humility) and so invincible a fondness of their pleasing conceit, of their great exaltation, that it usually signifies nothing at all to lay before them the most convincing evidences of their hypocrisy. Their state is indeed deplorable, and next to those who have committed the unpardonable sin. Some of this sort of persons seem to be most out of the reach of means of conviction and repentance."

## REASON FOR PLYMOUTH CONDEMNATION OF THE CHURCHES.

One reason, at least, for the Plymouth condemnation of the modern churches may now be clearly seen. Not one of these churches would admit any into her full communion who had no better basis for making a profession than the Plymouth basis. The door into the Plymouth fold is as wide as the very gate to destruction itself. It would require supernatural power to prevent some becoming Christians in the Plymouth sense, if only the evidence of the truth of Christianity were placed before them. But it would require the operation of a kind of power in the case of some which would efface their common-sense, before they could be made to think that mere belief in any kind of news could save. If the carnal heart should be made to imagine that mere belief in the record saves, it would, no doubt, feel grateful for such a salvation. But the gratitude would be merely a spark of its own kindling, or it would be like a weed which blossomed in uncultivated soil. We can easily understand how "C. H. M." speaks of what he thinks the "powerless profession of the day." Far better and safer for a man to feel he is in darkness than that the light he thinks he has should be darkness, as was the light of the Pharisee in the temple.



## XVI.

### *THE MORAL LAW AS A RULE OF LIFE FOR THE CHRISTIAN.*

THOSE who may be allured, whilst in their unrenewed state, into the making of a profession of the Christian religion, on account of the easily obtained faith presented to them in Plymouthism, must have what they are apt to regard as the asperities of this religion rounded off, or toned down for them, or they may not continue long in their profession. The way to life must be broadened for them, as well as the gate widened. But there are great limitations imposed on the individual will by the moral law. Therefore, although there is a needs-be that some respect be paid to this law to save appearances, yet the kind of respect which it receives from Plymouthism consists in politely bowing it out of court, as having no binding authority as a rule of life for the one who is good enough to take the view of Christ's finished work presented by the Plymouth system. It is like the respect paid our Lord himself by those who said, "Lord, Lord," and yet did not do the things He commanded.

Many are the devices employed among men for casting the cords of the anointed One away entirely, or else having them slackened to suit. There are many kinds of expressions uttered by the same spirit as said "Lord, Lord" in the old style. The Brethren will make much of Christ in their own way, and call Him "our rule of life," "our model," "our touchstone," "our all," etc., if only they will be excused from having Him as their real Lord and King, and from regarding themselves as having for a rule of life that law which He loved, kept, and magnified. The Brethren do not love to say that it is their duty to obey Christ, for this would make the matter too definite and exact, and would suggest too strongly that transgression of His commands, or shortcoming in rendering them perfect obedience, would be sin. This would be as galling as the moral law itself. The whole object of multitudes in every age, in regard to the moral law, is to get rid of its absolute perfection. Could they but tarnish one iota of it, they feel instinctively that there would be no standard of measurement to warn them how far they might go in the transgression of it with impunity.

The Brethren say they are "called" to follow Christ. "Called" is the soft expression used to suggest easiness and modification of law. The Brethren profess that it is their desire and aim to take Christ as their example, and to be Christ-like. But how can they possibly follow Him, and be like Him, unless they have the moral law in their

hearts and lives as He had in His? How can they regard themselves as married to such a person, as one spirit with Him, and yet be so diverse from Him in disposition? Is it not far more likely they are deceived?

#### MR. MACKINTOSH'S VIEWS.

But before we go further in our consideration of the relation of Plymouthism to the moral law, let us have the Brethren's own words on the point. Mr. Mackintosh writes as follows:—

“In a word, then, it is evident that a sinner cannot be justified by the works of the law; and it is equally evident that the law is not the rule of the believer's life. ‘For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.’ (Gal. iii. 10.) The law knows no such thing as a distinction between a regenerated man and an unregenerated man; it curses all who attempt to stand before it. It rules and curses a man as long as he lives. Nor is there any one who will so fully acknowledge that he cannot keep it as the true believer, and no one would be more thoroughly under the curse. What, therefore, is the ground of our justification? . . . what is our rule of life? The Word of God answers, ‘We are justified by faith of Christ,’ and Christ is our rule of life. . . . Then as to the believer's rule of life, the apostle does not say to me to live is the law, but ‘To me to live is Christ.’ (Phil. i. 21.) Christ is our rule, our model, our touchstone, our all. The continual inquiry of the Christian should be, not is this or that according to law? but is it like Christ? The law could never teach me to love, bless, and pray for my enemies; but this is exactly what the Gospel teaches me to do, and what the divine nature leads me to do. ‘Love is the fulfilling of the law,’ and yet were I to seek justification by the law, I should be lost; and were I to make the law my standard of action, I should fall far short of my proper mark. We are predestinated to be conformed not to the law, but to the image of God's Son. We are to be like Him. . . . Having thus life and righteousness in Christ, we are called to walk as He walked, and not merely to walk as a Jew. We are called to purify ourselves even as He is pure; to walk in His footsteps; to show forth His virtues; to manifest His spirit. . . . Let a believer only shape his way according to it, and see what it will make of him. We are fully convinced that if a man is walking according to the spirit of the Gospel, he will not commit murder nor steal; but we are also convinced that a man confining himself to the standard of the law of Moses, would fall very far short of the spirit of the Gospel. . . . The Father could not think of ruling with an iron law the prodigal whom He had received to His bosom in purest, deepest, richest grace. . . . The believer . . . stands not in law, but in grace, and he waits not for judgment, but for glory.”

The law is one of the three subjects this author professes to deal with in the pamphlet from which the foregoing extract is taken. The work is entitled “A Scriptural Inquiry into the Nature of the Sabbath, the Law, and the Christian Ministry”; and the author

labors hard to make out some rule of life for the believer, and there is every possible turn given to the believer's relation to Christ—every possible phase of this relation expressed, except the one of having Christ as King, and obeying Him. This would seem to be carefully avoided.

“C.H.M.,” the author last quoted, says in his “Notes on Exodus,” p. 232, that the vow made by Israel to keep the law of God, and obey Him, was “the most presumptuous vow that mortal lips could utter.” Although God approved of their vow (Deuteronomy v. 28, 29), this is nothing to Mr. Mackintosh.

#### THE VIEWS OF OTHER PLYMOUTH WRITERS.

Mr. Stanley, another of the chief Brethren writers, says: “I do not find the law ever presented as the rule of life or walk to the risen child of God. The law was perfect for the purpose for which it was given. But the new commandment goes much further, ‘That ye love one another AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.’” (“Justification in the Risen Christ,” p. 8.)

Mr. Darby, in his tract on “Law,” writes as follows: “The men before Moses, the Gentiles since, and Christians now, are not under law in any sense; for they are not under law, but under grace.” “A law to love God does not suit innocence.” “As many as are of the works of the law—on the principle of it; its works are not bad ones—are under the curse. (Galatians iii. 10.) That is, law means in the apostle's teaching, something else than a rule or measure of conduct. It is a principle of dealing with men which necessarily destroys and condemns them. This is the way in which the Spirit of God uses law in contrast with Christ, and never in Christian teaching puts men under it, but carefully shows how they are delivered from it—are no longer under it; nor does Scripture ever think of saying, ‘You are under the law in one way, but you are not in another; you are, not for justification, but you are as a rule of life.’” “Hence loving my neighbor as myself, I fulfil the law; not by having it, but having love wrought in me by grace, and not being under law.” “No Christian supposes he is at liberty to kill or steal. That is not the question. But does he refrain from killing or stealing because it is forbidden in the law? Every true Christian, I am persuaded, will answer, No, though he recognizes the prohibition as quite right. The man who refrained from killing simply because it was forbidden in the law, would be no Christian at all.” “He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. He is life, motive, and example too. He lives in us, and the life which we now live in the flesh, we live by the faith of Him. He has trod the path before us. He is all, and in all.” (Darby on “Law.”)

Mr. Darby is as careful as Mr. Mackintosh to refrain from saying that the Christian must *obey* Christ. The Brethren will dance around Him, and pay Him all the compliments they can think of, but they will not say that they accept Him as King, and must and will obey

Him. It would savor of legalism, they evidently think, were they to do so. The Brethren hold the strange views that there was no moral law in existence before it was formally given on Mount Sinai; that our first parents were not under law, either before or after the Fall; that there can be sin even where there is no law, and no moral obligation; and that what is meant by the expression, "sin is lawlessness," is that law was absent or non-existent; whereas the expression really means disregard, or violation of, existing law. (1 John iii. 4.)

Dr. Davis, another of the leading Brethren authors, writes thus: "Responsibility and moral obligation exist independently of law. Adam had these in the garden of Eden, and in breaking them brought in sin. Sin is defined in 1 John iii. 4 (which Mr. Darby translates—'whoso committs sin committs lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness'). Sin is lawlessness referring to a state, not an act. Transgression is the breaking of a given law. Sin (*i.e.*, lawlessness) was in the world, though not transgression. (Romans v. 13.)"

#### EPITOME OF PLYMOUTH DOCTRINE OF THE MORAL LAW.

Many more quotations could be made from Brethren authors, teaching the same doctrines about the moral law. But the extracts already given are sufficient to show clearly what Plymouth teaching on this point actually is. This teaching may be summed up thus: The Christian is not under the moral law as a rule of life, any more than he has been justified by this law. Christ's life is the rule for the Christian's life; Christ's example—His footsteps—should be followed. If the Christian loves he fulfils the law, and the law cannot help him, nor teach him to love, bless, or pray for his enemies. The Christian ought not to kill or steal, but should refrain from these, not because he is so commanded in the law, but because killing and stealing are contrary to the "spirit of the Gospel"; and, presumably, contrary to love and gratitude to Christ. There was sin, that is, "lawlessness," in the world before the moral law was given from Sinai, but there was no law before then. There can be sin, therefore, where there is neither law nor moral obligation of any kind. Let no reader suppose that in this discussion there is any reference in the use of the word "law," to the ceremonial law, nor to the civil nor judicial laws of the Jews. The exclusive reference on both sides is to the moral law only.

The principal Scripture passages by which the Brethren endeavor to prove their position, are those which speak of the Christian not being under law, but under grace; his being dead to the law, freed from this husband, and married to another (Romans vii. etc.), and his serving now in the newness of the Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

The doctrine which teaches that the Christian is not under the moral law as a rule of life, is called "Antinomianism," which means,

literally, against-law-ism. This abominable doctrine has had a most unsavory history, which we shall briefly notice.

### HISTORY OF ANTINOMIANISM.

In apostolic times some taught that Christians ought to commit sin that grace might abound, on account of their being not under the law but under grace. Others, through their thinking themselves free, used their freedom as a cloak of wickedness. (1 Peter ii. 16.) The ancient Gnostics were chiefly a sect of heathen philosophers who sought to amalgamate as much of the Gospel with their philosophy as they considered true, and rejected the remainder. Simon Magus is regarded by many authorities as the first Gnostic. Many of these philosophers taught that they were elevated above the common multitude on account of their wisdom and their contemplation of the divine. They supposed that they had a divine element within them which could not be polluted by sin, even although they should indulge in sin to their heart's content. As the ocean can receive many kinds of pollution without any appreciable effect, which could not be received by smaller quantities of water without being rendered filthy, so these philosophers imagined that on account of their large souls they could receive pleasure from sin without their being defiled, which the common crowd could not do. Accordingly this class of Gnostics indulged in various kinds of sin without restraint, and chiefly in the sin of fornication. Such were the Nicolaitans which troubled some of the ancient churches of Asia. (Rev. ii.) So also were those who taught the doctrine of Balaam in those churches. Some women were thought to be deficient in the grace of humility, and required to be made more humble, so as to appreciate the grace of the Gospel. It was taught that these should be induced to commit sin, so as to make them appreciate the grace of the gospel more. Marriage was reckoned as too much of a binding law, and as something which ought to be discarded for "free love." If a man and a woman loved each other, it was taught that there was no need of a law to bind them together. If they did not love each other, then it would be cruelty to keep them bound to each other by law. So "free love" was best, it was said. Under this degrading system several women had a succession of amours, and "loved much." Those who taught this system regarded the woman in the Gospel (Luke vii. 47), who had much forgiven her, as one who had had such a series of amours. It was because she was thus meritorious that she was forgiven. She had been forgiven much because she had thus "loved much."

The Gnostics regarded themselves so elevated above the common crowd that they did not require common worship, nor the sacraments, nor to keep the Sabbath, all of which were considered necessary in the case of the ordinary multitude. In fact, the sins and foibles of these great men were thought by the ordinary people as beautiful offsets to their character. It was also thought by some of those

ancient sages that when they had a heavy debt to pay they ought not to trouble themselves about it, for God who had already forgiven them so much, would surely forgive them the comparatively small sum they owed to so and so, although it were never paid.

At the time of the Reformation, John Agricola was the chief teacher of Antinomianism. He is said to have been a fickle, irascible, superficial man. He taught that good works are detrimental to salvation, and that the believer being accepted for what Christ did, it did not matter what he himself did. All who had to do with Moses, he said, "would go to the devil," and he averred that Moses ought to have been hanged, because it had been through him that the law had come. Luther was the chief opponent of Agricola. On account of the exposure Luther made of Agricola's doctrine, the latter had to recant and flee the country. After Luther's death he began again to teach his heresy, and had again to withdraw his views from publication.

Sometimes in the world's history political Antinomians appeared. Some severe laws were enacted against some of this class in England during the time of the Commonwealth. Thus Antinomianism may be easily seen to be a very old heresy, although, when some of the Plymouth preachers descant on their not being under law but under grace, they would have it understood by those who know no better, that their way of explaining this Scripture statement is a kind of discovery of the real gospel hid from the learned ignorance of the unconverted ministry in the modern churches. The history of Antinomianism shows the degrading and disgusting results of the doctrine as it takes shape in many minds; and many competent witnesses do testify that it has similar fruits not seldom among the Brethren themselves. The doctrine has produced many "filthy dreamers," who have been too successful in "beguiling unstable souls," promising and teaching them a false kind of liberty, whilst they themselves were the servants of corruption. Antinomianism is directly contrary to the direct statements of Scripture about the moral law. It is also against reason and common-sense, and against enlightened Christian consciousness.

#### THE MORAL LAW AS A RULE OF LIFE *versus* BEING A COVENANT OF LIFE.

The Scripture texts, often quoted by the Brethren, which refer to the Christian's freedom from the law, have no reference whatever to freedom from the law as *rule* of life, but to freedom from it as a *covenant* of life, which is a very different thing. The condition on which the sinner is offered eternal life is belief in Christ, not that of keeping the law perfectly, for he could not get life on the latter condition. By the keeping of the law perfectly no living flesh could be justified. Neither is the keeping of the law perfectly the condition on which the believer *continues* in life and divine favor. No believer could continue in life or favor on such a condition. The

believer is delivered from such a condition, from such a covenant, or bargain, for continuing in life. He could not perform his side of such a bargain, and, therefore, could never have eternal life were this the bargain, or covenant, under which he was. This is always what the apostles mean when they say that the believer is delivered, or free, from the law, or dead to the law, or the law dead to him. The law is dead as a *condition* of life, but it is a very different thing to say that it is dead as a *rule* of the believer's life—a rule of his thinking, speaking, and acting.

The Brethren apparently cannot distinguish between being under the law as a *condition* of life, and being under it as a *rule* of life. But there is a great difference between the two states. If a man is under the law as a condition of life, then if he once breaks it in any part he will forfeit his life and every blessing, and he will not receive pardon, no matter how he cries for it. The law knows nothing of pardon nor mercy. But the believer being under the law as a rule of life, but not as a condition of life, if he should break it, which he does continually, he receives pardon for Christ's sake when he confesses and forsakes his sin. There is surely a great difference between a believer receiving pardon when he confesses and forsakes his sin, and his not receiving pardon although he should confess and forsake his sin. But although he thus receives pardon, this by no means implies that it is no sin for him to break the law of the Ten Commandments. If it were no sin for him to break the law, he would not need pardon when he does so.

Either the Christian is under the law as a rule of life, or he is not. If he is not, as the Brethren would have us believe, then it ought to be very clear that he may break the law at pleasure without his committing any sin in so doing. For instance, although the law says thou shalt not kill, steal, commit adultery, bear false witness, covet, etc., yet the Christian, if he is not under the law as a rule of his life, he may kill, steal, etc., at pleasure without his committing any sin, or displeasing God. If the Christian, however, should kill, or steal, etc., he commits sin. However little he should be guilty of doing any of these things, yet if he does any of them in any degree, he commits sin in so doing. If not, then he would require some rule to tell him how much he might steal and kill without its being wrong, or a sin, or displeasing to God. This would be bringing the law into contempt. As has been already said, either the believer is under the law as a rule of his life, or else he is not under it. He cannot be both under it and not under it at the same time. But that he is really under the moral law of the Ten Commandments will be plain, if it be asked, Can the believer make a graven image of God to worship, swear falsely or profanely, have another God before the one true and living God, kill, steal, etc., without his committing sin? The natural conscience itself ought to tell the Brethren that the believer is under this law as a rule of his life, and cannot break any part of it without his committing sin and requiring pardon.

The Brethren wriggle desperately to cast the cords of the moral

law from them. They constantly remind us that the Christian is not under the law but under grace, . . . as if this would prove their point. The Christian is not under the law as a *condition* of life, as we have already explained. He obtains pardon by favor, or of grace, for Christ's sake. Whatever foolish meaning the Brethren may attach to the Christian being under grace, it ought to be clear that it does not mean that he is not under the law as a rule of life, if it be simply asked, Is the Christian at liberty, because he is under grace, to kill and steal and have other gods before the true God? This question will always make the position of the Christian, with regard to the moral law, clear to any unprejudiced mind. The apostle himself was evidently of opinion that some foolish people would be likely to imagine from his expression that "we are not under the law but under grace," that we can break the law if we choose, for he immediately asks, "Shall we sin then, because we are not under the law but under grace? God forbid," says he. The Brethren, however, turn a somersault in another direction, and they tell us they are not under the law, but that it is their duty to obey Christ and follow His example. "Christ is our rule, our model, our touchstone, our all," says Mr. Mackintosh. "The continual inquiry of the Christian should be," adds he, "not is this or that according to law, but is it like Christ? . . . We are predestinated to be conformed, not to the law, but to the image of His Son. We are to be like Him." "He has left us as an example that we should follow His steps," says Darby, and he adds. "He is life, motive and example too. . . . He trod the path before us. He is all, and in all."

#### CHRIST'S EXAMPLE IS MORAL LAW.

As we have already seen, these authors do not say even that it is incumbent on the Christian to *obey* Christ's commands. The Brethren are very far astray in imagining that because it is incumbent on the Christian to follow the example, and should obey the precepts, of Christ, this shows that he is not under the moral law as a rule of life. The same question is still valid to keep the inquirer right: Is the Christian at liberty to kill and steal because he is under obligation to follow Christ's example and precepts? If he is not, he is still under the law which forbids these things, let the Brethren wriggle as they may. Do they say that it is wrong to kill and steal, but that what makes this wrong and sinful is not that these things are forbidden in the law, but that they are un-Christ-like? This is actually the Brethren's opinion. Mr. Darby says, "No Christian supposes he is at liberty to kill or steal. That is not the question," says he. And then he goes on to remark: "But does he refrain from killing and stealing because it is forbidden in the law? Every true Christian, I am persuaded, will answer No, though he recognizes the prohibition as quite right. The man who refrained from killing simply because it was forbidden in the law, would be no Christian at all." These are extraordinary statements. If there is no command-



ment anywhere forbidding the Christian to kill and steal, then he may do these things without sinning. If Christ's precepts, example, and the recognized obligation to be Christ-like, loving, thankful, etc., come not to the Christian with the force and sanction of authoritative commands, then there is no sin whatever in his transgressing these, but a new kind of sin called into existence by the Brethren to help them to fight the moral law. The apostle John says that "sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John iii. 4.) Brethren authors prefer to translate this, "Sin is lawlessness." But they most seriously misinterpret the meaning of the word "lawlessness" here. The word does not mean, as the Brethren imagine, the *absence* of the law, or being without the existence of the law. It means living as if there was no law, whilst the law exists. In other words, "lawlessness" here means disregarding the law, treating it as non-existent, just as the Brethren do. Whatever way the Brethren regard themselves as under prohibition from killing and stealing, the prohibition is divine and binding. This is law, whether given by Christ or found in the moral law. Further, an example is not of itself binding, unless there be a law or command telling us to follow the example. When we are told to follow an example, it is always implied that the example itself followed the law or command which it is our duty to follow.

The following of Christ's example is obligatory on us, because He himself obeyed perfectly the moral law which is the rule of the Christian's life. Do the Brethren imagine that the following of Christ's example is an easier, or less stringent, law than the moral law; His example is to be our only rule, does not the least depart from that example involve us in guilt, which is just sin as before? Is the Christian to imagine that he can follow Christ's example only when and how he chooses? Does he fall into sin when he comes short in word, thought, or deed, of conforming to that example, or when he transgresses it? If not, then he may come short or transgress in some measure without sin. How much? or how far may he go in either of these lines without sinning? Have the Brethren any standard to let them know this? They would require another gospel to explain the one we have—a gospel or supplement of moral weights and measures, if so be we can somewhat transgress, or come short of, Christ's example without sin. Christ delighted in the moral law and kept it perfectly, and if His example is to be our rule, and if we sin in every failure to follow that example, what change is made if it be said that it is Christ's example the Christian is to follow, rather than the moral law?

But our Lord not only kept the moral law himself, and makes it incumbent on His disciples to follow His example, but in His teaching He expressly warns people from imagining that He came to destroy or abrogate the law or the prophets. He came to fulfil them. One jot or tittle—*i.e.*, the very smallest part—of the moral law could in nowise pass away till all should be fulfilled, or satisfied. Even then the law cannot pass away. In the new heavens and the new earth it will be in complete realization in the hearts and wills of all

God's people, for it is the law of perfect love. One law of perfect love was not abrogated that another law of perfect love might come in its place. Our Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount was principally an amplification of the moral law. He showed how extensive that law is, that it embraced the thoughts and desires as well as the outward conduct. It was a restatement and emphasizing of the moral law for His own followers. By the very nature of the foundation on which the moral law rested, it would be easier for heaven and earth to pass away than the very smallest part of this law. God's will as expressed in the moral law is founded upon His nature, and His nature cannot change. His will as expressed in ceremonial laws, or civil laws, might change, because these were not founded in the same way on the divine nature. But it would have been impossible for God to have given such a law to man as "thou shalt hate the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and shalt hate thy neighbor as thyself." Neither could any of the details of the moral law be altered, for they are all similarly founded.

In other parts of the New Testament also, as well as in the Sermon on the Mount, the moral law is restated and emphasized as the rule of the Christian's life. Faith does not supersede the law, it establishes its validity for the Christian. (Rom. iii. 31.) See also Rom. iii. 8, 9; Eph. vi. 1; James ii. 8, 10, 11 (and James is writing to Christians). The apostle delighted in the law of God after the inner man, but it is not likely he could delight in a law that only cursed him. He says he served the law of God. (Rom. vii. 22, 25.) The law is spiritual, he tells us. He had not known sin except the law had pointed it out to him. When the law said thou shalt not covet, did it imply that he might not heed this precept any more, after he came to Christ, and that the law said this only to frighten him into the state in which he then was? Was it understood that once he came to Christ he might snap his fingers at the law which had so frightened him, and say to it: "Now I am not any more going to abstain from coveting because *you* tell me, but I am to abstain in thankfulness and love to Christ."

#### PLYMOUTH CONCEPTION OF "SERVING IN THE NEWNESS OF THE SPIRIT."

The Brethren often remind us that the Christian is said to serve in "the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." By serving in the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter, is not meant, however, that the Christian does not now serve in the letter, but that he has now the spirit *along with* the letter. If a man were to find it his duty to be in a room with a corpse from day to day, and to be dressing it and addressing it, he would find it very dismal work. But if we can suppose that, like Lazarus' case of old, the spirit came back to the dead man, and he was now able to enter into social and animated conversation with the one who had previously tended his dead body, this would be an illustration of the

apostle's meaning when he says we serve not in the oldness (*i.e.*, deadness, formality) of the letter, but have the spirit along with the letter. But what the Brethren mean by their way of looking at the matter, is the same as if the man in the room at first with the dead body should be able at length to say: "Now the spirit has come back, but the body has gone, and I am left alone with a ghost." This is just of a piece with the rest of Plymouthism. "Plymouthism a ghost," said Dr. Duncan. It dislikes everything definite and prefers the haze. It loves not anything in the form of church organization, definite views of Scripture set forth in a Confession, exact thinking, definite law or command, etc. They ought to see to it that they will not be themselves found at last in a haze, with no substantiality or reality in their salvation. God forbid.

Let the Brethren note that the only way we can have in this sub-lunary condition of knowing the spirit is through the letter, and the only way we can have of carrying out the spirit is by means of acting according to the letter. There are those who profess to be thought-readers, but the only way ordinary people have of making out the thoughts of each other is by means of the letter of some speech, or other sign, made by the body. If the Brethren can do without the letter in discovering what the spirit would have them do, and if they can act properly without the letter to guide them, they have attained indeed to something of the spirituality of discernment that they seem to profess to have.

#### THE PLYMOUTH CONCEPTION OF LOVE BEING A FULFILMENT OF THE LAW.

The Brethren often remind us, also, that it is said that love is the fulfilling of the law. But they misinterpret the text which they thus quote, as unfortunately they do with almost every other text cited by them. Whose love has ever been accepted *as a substitute* for the fulfilling of the law? Not Adam's when it was perfect. Not Christ's. And shall the Christian's now? If a man loves perfectly, may he then kill and steal, or may he refrain from doing as the law directs? If he loves, he will all the more certainly perform. Love never emancipates from duty, but moves in the line thereof with freedom, and it is in this sense that the presence of perfect love guarantees the fulfilling of the law. And in proportion to the degree of strength attained by an imperfect love will be the practical obedience to the dictates of the law. The circumstance that a Christian loves, does not alter any duty for him. A strange spectacle, indeed, it would be for one calling himself a Christian, standing in the presence of his duty, and begging to be excused because he is one that now has got love! What kind of witness for Christianity would such a one be? If he had no love, then it would be his duty to do certain things, but now that he has got love, he may refrain! A strange Christianity this is! Had it been the Christianity of Paul, he would, no doubt,

when describing love in the thirteenth of first Corinthians, have given it as one of the principal characteristics of this grace, that it does nothing. The kind of love that consists in saying "Be ye warmed and filled," is not Christian love. And if we love Christ, this love will constrain us to live not unto ourselves but unto Him. The Brethren will, of course, readily admit this, as they often admit both sides of two contradictory statements. It would be nothing unusual for them, were they to assert that perfect love would constrain to perfect obedience, and also that perfect love would be accepted instead of, or would be equal to, perfect obedience. They do not seem to perceive that wherever there is obedience there must also be law or command.

But even were we under such an economy of salvation as would admit of perfect love being accepted as a substitute for the keeping of the law, it would by no means follow that an imperfect love, like that of the Christian here below, could be so accepted. But, if by love being a fulfilling of the law be meant that love constrains to the obedience to the law, then it is evident that the text that refers to love being a fulfilling of the law is one of the many that shows that the apostle's opinion, at least, was that the Christian is still under the law as the rule of life. The context itself of the passage ought to have made it clear to the Brethren what the meaning of the passage is.

The carnal mind is said to be enmity against the law of God, which implies that the new heart loves this law. It was, indeed, one of special blessings promised God's people in the New Dispensation, that the law was to be in a particular manner written on their hearts, that is, in their love, and not merely in their consciences, where even the Gentiles had it written. If a man love the law, he will certainly seek to have it as a rule of life. Mr. Mackintosh says, in a passage already quoted, that the law "curses all who attempt to stand before it. It rules and curses a man," says he, "as long as he lives." It must then be a very doubtful blessing, in Mr. Mackintosh's view, to have this cursing thing so close as to be written in the heart. What is in the heart we love, and if it be what has a voice, we love to hear that voice. The loved one is addressed in the song of Solomon in the words, "Let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice." The one thus addressed is the same as prayed on another occasion, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart," and, no doubt, she was in the heart of the One she thus supplicated. So the law is in the heart, the love, of the true Christian, as certainly as it was in David's heart. The statutes of the Lord were the song of David in the house of his pilgrimage. But it would be a very strange love that could endure to expend itself on a cursing thing, and hear its voice with delight. When the law was to be written on the heart, it was not meant merely to have it there as a substitute for the keeping of it, but that there should be a walking in the statutes of God.

The Brethren are of opinion that the Old Testament saints were under the law. But how could they possibly be so, according to the

Brethren's conception, for Mr. Mackintosh says that it curses all who attempt to stand before it? If Christians cannot now, as the Brethren say, be under the law without being under its curse, how was it possible for the Old Dispensation saints to be saved at all, for none can be saved who are under the curse all their lives? But really, consistency seems to count for nothing in Plymouth theology. The fact is that it is from the curse of the law that Christ delivered His people, but never from its precepts.

Mr. Mackintosh says that the law cannot teach him to love and pray for his enemies. Certainly it does. It bids him love his neighbor as himself, and if his neighbor be morally diseased, and hates where he ought to love, will not Mr. Mackintosh's love seek to have this neighbor cured? The law does not, indeed, give the power to love. It assumes the existence of this power. Man lost the power, the Gospel is the remedy. But if the power is restored through the remedy, surely this does not imply that the power when restored is no longer to be used. The Brethren seem to imagine that the power to love, when once restored, is not to be a power to exercise itself in obedience or law-keeping, but that the love has got a new license, and its existence is accepted instead of obedience to law or rule, another of the short-cuts of Plymouthism.

#### DOES GOSPEL RESTORATION IMPLY LICENSE TO BREAK LAW?

Suppose that a man has violated a law of nature by habitually taking too much strong drink until his reason is dethroned, and he goes straight towards a precipice over which he would certainly fall to his destruction. But say that a kind and skilful physician has arrested him in his motion, administered an expensive remedy, which has had the effect of restoring his reason, but only to the stage at which an infant's reason is at. After his reason has again developed in the usual way, would it not be extremely foolish to suppose that his physician would address him in any such terms as these: Now, since your reason has been restored you are no longer subject to natural laws. You can now take all the strong drink you choose, and it will never affect you prejudicially. You need not open your eyes in order to see the light, for the laws of light will be altered for your sake, and the light will now penetrate your eyelids even should you keep them firmly closed. You need not walk except you choose; you can fly. And in regard to laws of the mind and heart, they are changed also for your sake, or suspended altogether, just as you wish. You can now hate a man and he will love you. You can now speak the reverse of what you mean and you will be understood.

How absurd would such an address be, and to absurdity would be added self-inconsistency, if the physician should add: As for me, I love natural laws, and have always kept them perfectly. But as for you, these laws are abrogated, and you have only to be like me. Love me, converse with me, and be prepared at length to abide with me in perfect likeness and love, and you will maintain this likeness and

love, if, whilst I love and keep the natural laws perfectly, you disregard or break them at pleasure. Only follow my example, and disregard the laws that I love and keep.

The fact is, that if the physician should put his patient in such a position as would be indicated by such sentences, he would have restored his reason in order to make him tenfold worse than he had been after he had lost it. His reason would have been restored only in name. If his reason should be really restored, it would show its restoration precisely in the more careful observation of those very natural laws, through the previous breaking of which he had lost it. He would respect all natural laws more than ever, if he was restored to right reason. It is precisely the same with the Christian and the moral law.

Further, if the patient is to become, like his exemplar, the physician, it is not by disregarding the natural laws, but by his carefully observing them, and growing in the spirit that loves and obeys them ; and thus coming to feel his way after the spirit of his physician, he comes at length to understand it, and be like him in reality and truth, with no short-cut, self-inconsistency, irrationality, or sleight-of-hand, about it.

It is a poor kind of theologizing which seeks to mar the perfection of the moral law by attempting to play off the Gospel against it. It is terrible work to be seeking consciously or otherwise to pervert Scripture for the purpose of having the appearance of divine sanction for the undermining of its own foundation principles.

## XVII.

### *LIFE, LIGHT, LAW AND LEARNING.*

WE shall endeavor to include some notices of the chief of the remaining doctrines of Plymouthism in our comparatively brief treatment of the important subjects named at the heading of this chapter. The treatment of these subjects will be analogous to the building of a house. We shall seek to point out the true materials for such building, and when these are known, the false or unsuitable materials will, as it were, fall out of themselves.

Our treatment of the above subjects will be in accordance with Scripture properly interpreted. What has been already said in this pamphlet may be regarded as in a certain sense an expansion of what is still to follow. Thus additional light on what has preceded may be had by a proper study of the sequel.

#### LIFE.

We cannot tell what life is in itself. But we know that the life of the human body is very precious, and that the life of the soul, or spirit-life, is still more so. The latter is the only life that is eternal. What has been done by God to secure this life for us shows how precious it is in His estimation.

There exist various kinds of life. The lowest is the vegetable. Above it is the animal life. Higher still there is what we may call the rational-moral life of the unrenewed man. The highest of all is the spiritual life, or spirit-life.

#### LIFE'S DYNAMICS AND ACTIVITIES.

Each kind of life possesses what we may call life-forces, moving principles, or dynamics. Steam is the moving force, or dynamic, of the engine. In the vegetable the dynamics are little else than mere properties of living vegetable matter. The chief activities to which these forces in the vegetable give rise are the processes of assimilation, rejection of waste matter, and growth. These activities are non-voluntary. The vegetable has no will, therefore the Creator directs its life-forces to their proper ends.

The lower animals possess the kind of dynamics and non-voluntary activities possessed by the vegetable. But they also possess additional dynamics and activities not had by the vegetable kingdom. For instance, the animals are moved by appetite, desires, and instincts.

They have also senses. The exercises of the voluntary dynamics are made over to the control of the animal itself. The higher the life, the more is given into its own hand of the control of its own activities.

The unrenewed man possesses all the kinds of dynamics and non-voluntary activities possessed by each life below his own. He is also moved by affections, emotions, desires, passions, and sentiments, not possessed by any of the lower lives. He has likewise reason and conscience. There is, therefore, still more given into the hand of even the unrenewed man to direct and control. Man is also capable of attaining to more knowledge as to how his life-forces and their resulting activities may be improved and increased. It is at this stage in the scale of life that responsibility first appears. Man is a moral, accountable, agent. Man's conscience postulates the existence of a fountain of supreme authority, just as the lungs, and as the wings of the bird, postulate the existence of air.

Spirit-life possesses additional dynamics not possessed by any life below itself. It has new desires, affections, emotions, and impulses, with their resulting activities. The living spirit is also in union and communion with God, the source of life. Each life is practically dead to the special dynamics in the life above itself. The spiritually dead man cannot move in the sphere of the spiritual. He may, indeed, perform many of the actions performed by the spiritually living man, but his dynamic is non-spiritual.

#### EACH HIGHER LIFE OUGHT TO POSSESS THE LOWER ONE.

The word *possess* is here used in its widest meaning, as signifying to control and use. Man ought to possess in this sense his animal nature, with all its special dynamics and resulting activities. He ought not to aim at eradicating these, as is done in some forms of monastic and ascetic life.

What is specially important to observe in this connection is, that the spirit-life possesses the rational-moral life as an indispensable requisite of its existence. In the spiritually perfect or complete man, the moral must be perfect also. This important truth will be afterwards referred to more particularly.

There is a great difference between fire possessing a house and a house possessing fire. Fire and water are said to be good servants but bad masters. It is disastrous when the animal life possesses the man, instead of his possessing it. If the lower life comes to possess the higher in the man, the latter will descend lower than the normal plane of the life which has mastered it. Animals do not debauch themselves with various kinds of lusts, as man does when his animal nature comes to master him. The angels that sinned descended lower than the lowest life here on earth. On account of the high kind of life given to man, it is possible for him to make a very devil of himself. Whenever the lower life possesses the higher, the latter is perverted, and its light extinguished.



There are also in man certain evil affections and propensities, which are purely evil. Man can, moreover, be tenanted by evil and malign spirits. In the list given of the works of the flesh in the fifth of Galatians, some of these evil forces are mentioned, and also some of the results of the domination of the animal nature are enumerated. Man must seek to eradicate the purely evil forces within him, and possess the forces of his lower life. If he succeed he will be crowned. The victorious Christian is a king as well as a priest. He must, indeed, be a king in this sense in order to sustain his character as a priest. In other words, he must rule himself, must possess his lower life-forces, and successfully resist the malignant ones, before he can draw near to God and offer acceptable service. Only the pure can ascend the hill of the Lord, and abide in His presence. (Psa. xxiv. 3-5.)

Some internal forces in man are like fire. They will increase and blaze away by every thought and imagination on which they can lay hold. Some men, through pride and self-flattery, unwittingly keep on feeding this devastating flame. Thus several forms of those havoc-working fanaticisms already mentioned are caused. Men become possessed.

#### LIFE'S DYNAMICS REQUIRE THE STAMP OF THE MORAL.

It is of importance to observe that every force is in itself blind. Force has no light, no intelligence, to guide its activity. Steam has in itself no directive light. Neither have our affections, sentiments, impulses, passions, etc. The engine requires the rails to direct its steam power. Man needs some kind of light to direct any forces that may stir within him. If a man has nothing but blind force stirring within him, he is neither moral nor non-moral in the activities which spring from these forces. The lower animals can be moved by kicks and caresses. What could be moral in a man being impelled to act by a force which he could not resist, even should the force urge him in a direction in itself right? But, of course, if he himself had something to do with bringing himself under such force, in doing this something he acted as a responsible moral agent.

In order to make activities moral, there is necessary the exercise of reason and conscience. A man must make deliberate choice of certain actions for the reason that they are right in themselves, as well as that they may be pleasant or profitable. He must realize that he is under moral obligation. What virtue is in a man going where he is impelled to go? To be a moral agent he must have principles of a proper kind developed within him. He must have mastery of life's forces, which implies that he examines them, and the direction in which they should move him, and that he restrains, strengthens, directs, as required. But he cannot do this if he permit life's forces, or any other influence, to bring him under a species of intoxication. A man whose reason is suspended is not a

moral agent. A man's lights must be in front if he is to be moral in the direction he takes. His reason and conscience must be in exercise.

The man who is under divine training and guidance will get scope for reason, conscience, and the power of choice, to be in exercise. He will not be hurried forward, but will ever and anon be brought to a stand, and made to think, and examine, and choose. He will often be brought face to face with the divine command, in the dark as to why such command has been given, so that his naked sense of duty and the divine command may meet. Life-forces may be hushed for the time being. God may be virtually saying to him, "What I do thou knowest not now," etc. Man must always preserve a sense that God is Sovereign Ruler, Whom we must obey in the dark as well as in the light. If man always felt the divine commands to be in themselves pleasant, as the drunkard feels the intoxicating cup to be, then his sense of duty, his moral agency, would not be in exercise, nor properly trained. God would not be accorded the proper place in his estimation nor feelings, which implies that he could not be saved. Eternal life consists in knowing the veritable God in Christ. This knowledge cannot be attained if God's true place in relation to the man be seriously misapprehended.

#### OUR FIRST PARENTS AND THE DIVINE AUTHORITY.

Our first parents had true life-forces stirring within them, urging them in right directions. The moral law was written on their hearts. They were by nature inclined to be truthful, loving, godly. Had the tempter urged them to tell a falsehood, or to slay each other, he would not have been successful; for their life-forces, with which they had been created, and had obtained as a working capital, would have prevented such a suggestion being successful. But before the first pair could have been confirmed for eternity, as true kings and priests, in full and moral possession of life's forces, they would require to have, and maintain, a perfect realization that God is the Lord, the Sovereign Ruler, whom they were bound to obey in darkness as well as in light, and on whom they were utterly dependent. They would require to have an abiding realization of God's true place in relation to them. There was no life force, therefore, stirring within them disinclining them from partaking of the fruit of any particular tree, as there was disinclining them to hate each other. There was, purely and simply, the divine command given.

Their naked sense of duty to God, therefore, was thus tested in a direction where life's forces were not felt to urge. They did not stand the test. Malignant forces obtained possession of them, and they were thus confirmed in evil, rather than have the stamp of the moral upon the forces of life. In the case of Adam, the head of the first covenant, there was probably a stronger temptation brought to bear upon him than there was upon the mother of our race. His love to Eve, a life-force with which he had been created, was brought into

conflict with a naked sense of duty—the sense of moral obligation to obey God, whether he knew the reason or not for the command. Every life-force must realize and acknowledge supreme allegiance to God ere it has the stamp of the moral ; in other words, the man must *possess* his life-forces. Union and communion with God require this. God must ever be realized as the Lord, whatever our feelings may say. Man must not be inebriated when he approaches the Most High. God will be sanctified in or on all that comes nigh Him. Man must then specially know what he is doing.

#### IS MAN A MORAL AGENT IF ALWAYS INEBRIATED BY FEELING ?

But all this does not imply that the spiritually living man is acting non-morally when he is pleasantly moved onwards in the right direction by some benign and pleasant influence, nor even when he resigns himself with a measure of abandon to the pleasant current of life-forces. A man is not acting non-morally when he abandons himself to sleep. But if he permit sleep to overcome him when it is his duty to keep awake, he is morally wrong. If, however, he resigns himself to sleep in the proper time, although he is not, strictly speaking, in moral agency when under the influence of sleep, yet he acted as a moral agent in his deciding what to do in reference to the sleep that he felt coming over him.

Often before a man has begun to experience the stirring of any life-forces, urging him forward in the direction he has chosen, he has had an opportunity afforded him to make choice of that path, with nothing in the shape of attractiveness presented to him except that his reason and conscience told him he was right ; or else the explicit or implicit divine command presented itself before him, along with much that had the prospect of being painful and involving self-denial, if he should make choice of obedience. After he has stood the test, the life-forces may begin to stir and move him pleasantly forward in the direction of which he has made moral choice. These forces will then have upon them the stamp and seal of the moral. They will be possessed by the man, rather than they possess him, or extinguish his moral and rational light by their impelling force. Often when God means to make a man feel the power of His grace stirring in His soul, He first places him in circumstances where his conscience alone comes into contact with the bare divine command, and where, in the midst of strong temptations to the contrary, he makes moral and deliberate choice of the right. His moral light is thus, as it were, put in front, and the moral life-forces are made to follow pleasantly, in their own proper place, where they will not possess nor dim the sense of duty.

Our Lord was tried in the wilderness, and had many attractive plans presented to Him. He made choice of duty, depending on the general promise of the Father. The angels came and ministered unto Him. He soon went in the power of the Spirit to Galilee to begin His public ministry. Even in Him the life-forces held their

proper place, and were made to do so by the same process as His followers undergo. They are conformed to Him in this as in all else of a moral and spiritual kind. The apostle describes the process in Romans v. 3-5. Tribulation first, with all its temptations to murmuring, stepping aside from the cross, seeking short-cuts, trusting in some arm of flesh, etc.; no life-forces stirring within. The man must be proved to make choice of the right, choice of the divine command, from a sense of moral obligation alone. The life-forces are, as it were, in abeyance, so that they may have more of the dross mingling with them purged out. Then they shall take their own place, and be prepared to arise by and by as a new song in the night, purified and musical. There is an opportunity for patience, self-examination, confessing, resolving, in the night of tribulation. This, when the proper choice is made, and sustained through the night of weeping, will work proof of one's heart. Proof will work hope that makes not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart through the Holy Ghost given. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation," and possesses his soul in his patience. He will become a more complete king. He will have more of the tree of life, the hidden manna, given him, and will read his new name all the clearer in the white stone. They that wait on the Lord when life-forces are at a low ebb, will yet mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint. Their hearts will be enlarged to run in the way of the divine commands. They shall have more of the spirit put into the letter, when the life-forces shall return purified and renovated, and their volume increased.

#### LIFE-FORCES MAY SEEM STRONG WHEN IN REALITY WEAK.

Sometimes the life-forces in the Christian appear strong and vigorous for, and in, religious duty, when they are indeed weak. The goodness is as the morning cloud and the early dew, or as the joy of the stony-ground hearer. Peter's life-force seemed very strong when he insisted that he would sooner die with the Lord than deny Him. But when the real life-forces were purified and put in the right way to grow, Peter stood trembling and grieved before his Lord's third asking of the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" But having been purified, these forces soon grew, and Peter, the true rock it was predicted he would be, stood before the Sanhedrim without fear, and urged that he must obey God rather than men. When Job's life-forces were purified we hear no more of his determinations to hold his righteousness, as it were in his own strength, until he died. The life-forces of several young Christians seem very strong in the morning of their religious lives, and they are under the temptation to suppose that those whose energy does not seem so abundant as their own are Christians only in name; but the step of the latter is probably more steady and far stronger than theirs. We have heard the complaint made that many of our young men, after going through their college curriculum in preparation for the ministry, appear with

less evangelistic fervor than when they had begun. The colleges are sometimes blamed for such results, on account of the heretical teaching supposed to be given in them. But the real cause, in several instances, is the purification of life's forces which takes place under study. In purification they may seem for a time weaker, because they had been previously of a mixed character, like the multitude that came out of Egypt under Moses. Of course, study will effect in some what trials will effect in others, namely, the proof that they never possessed true spiritual life-forces. But when life-forces appear to get weak under study, it does not always follow that the study is hurtful. True study is, indeed, never so. When our Lord warns against fainting in prayer, He assumes that there may be strong forces stirring when the suppliant begins. But delay in the answer causes self-examination, thinking of deserts, etc. This may bring on a fainting experience; but are we to conclude, therefore, that prayer is bad, or of doubtful utility? Was our Lord's questioning of Peter of doubtful benefit because Peter felt weak under it?

Some Christians, when they pray that they may be "drawn" in the right way, mean to ask that they be made to feel such stirring of power within as would impel them pleasantly along in the right direction. They may not be quite prepared, however, for a direct answer to their prayer, in the manner they *expect* it to come. Before they can safely experience the "drawing" power, they must be in a position to *possess* it, and not it them. Their moral lights, and sense of moral obligation, must be put more in front, and the Hearer of prayer may, as the first instalment of answers, take measures to have this necessary preparation accomplished. The process may be painful, and may surprise them. When some of the Brethren exclaim, as Dr. Tregelles says they do, "Oh, this head knowledge, this intellectual study of the truth; how it does lead our minds away from Christ," they evidently desire to be constantly under a species of inebriation in their religion, so as to submerge their sense of duty, and render choice, the operations of conscience, and trial, unnecessary. They desire, in fact, the kind of continuously pleasant feelings that would supersede, or render impossible, that they should be moral agents at all. They wish a safe kind of intoxication. Were this the way to be truly religious, the carnal heart itself would never be enmity against true religion. We would not, however, go so far as the late Henry Ward Beecher, who once remarked something to the effect that the one who is always under exciting emotion is more fit for an asylum than for any other place.

But the kind of aid that many have before their minds when, as we have said, they pray for divine drawing, is a species of aid which would only blind them, and put their internal forces in possession of them, instead of the reverse. When we pray for "drawing," we ought to have it in view that our reason and conscience also should be developed and enlightened, and should stand the needed test for this being properly effected. We ought to have this in view, as well as that our life-forces should be strengthened and purified.

But we are often too fond of what merely gives pleasure, and supersedes the days of trial that are required to do the very things that we pray for.

“ I asked the Lord that I might grow  
In faith and love and every grace ;  
Might more of His salvation know,  
More earnestly might seek His grace.

“ I thought that in some favored hour,  
At once He'd answer my request ;  
And by His love's constraining power,  
Subdue my sins and give me rest.

“ Instead of this He made me feel  
The hidden evils of my heart ;  
And let the angry powers of hell  
Assault my soul in every part.

“ Nay more, with His own hand He seemed  
Intent to aggravate my woe ;  
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,  
Blasted my gourds and laid me low.

“ ‘ Lord, why is this ? ’ I trembling cried ;  
‘ Wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death ? ’  
‘ This is the way, ’ the Lord replied,  
‘ I answer prayer for grace and faith.

“ ‘ These inward trials I employ,  
From pride and self to set thee free,  
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,  
That thou mayst seek thine all in Me. ’ ”

#### LIGHT.

As already observed, in the lower animals, instinct is the light that directs the life-forces, but instinct itself partakes too much of the nature of a blind life-force for its being moral. In man, the internal lights are reason and conscience. Through the exercise of these he can, by means of observation and experience, increase their light-giving capacity. Man can observe the experiences of others, and is able to learn about these from books and conversation, etc. Language is thus a means of light, and the more languages learned the greater the means of light. By means of books man can learn from the experiences of every past age. He can also draw conclusions, and make deductions, from his own direct observations, as well as from those of others. He has revelation, direct teaching of others regarding it, and example, etc., to guide him in more directly spiritual matters. These are among man's chief means of light.

The divine revelation given to man in the Bible is one of the chief means for the creation of the spirit-life. There is light required for

the creation of this kind of life, especially in the adult. Eternal life is a knowledge. (John xvii. 3.) Life and light are closely associated in the Word of God. Light is required also for the stimulating, developing, and growth, of spirit-life. If we are to grow in grace we must grow also in knowledge.

Light stimulates and develops life, not by acting upon it as a mere blind force from without or within. It does not stimulate by mere magic, but through the operations of reason and conscience. By the operations of these, light is admitted into the soul. By means of light we examine and study the meaning of what is told us, and we distinguish between one object and another. Our faculties of perception and apprehension are in exercise in the reception of the light of God's Word.

## XVIII.

### *LIFE, LIGHT, LAW AND LEARNING.*

*(Continued.)*

#### LAW.

BY means of the light, both internal and external, vouchsafed to man, it is intended that he should guide his way amid the various kinds of laws with which, like a network, he is surrounded. If he should lose even the light of reason alone, he could not conduct himself safely amid even natural laws themselves. He might imagine he could fly, and cast himself from the top of a precipice ; or he might think he could walk on the surface of the water, and might leap down from the ship in mid-ocean ; or he might in some other way get injured or destroyed through the operation of natural laws. By means of his various kinds of light, however, he can guide himself amid existing law, so as not only to avoid injury—except, of course, in the case of accident—but also that the various laws amid which he exists will operate for his benefit.

#### NATURAL LAWS.

Various kinds of laws exist, some of which it may be well here to explain, and it may be well also to offer some observations on the working and effects of certain kinds of laws. There are natural laws, such as the laws of gravitation, the laws of chemistry, and of all physical sciences, the laws of health, growth, etc. In fact, in everything that man deliberately does, he calculates, or presumes instinctively, upon the working and effect of natural law. When, for instance, a farmer sows his seed, he calculates, or presumes instinctively, that the seed will not fly upward when let go ; he also calculates on the effect of rain, warmth, the strength of the soil, etc., in producing growth and eventual maturity. When he takes food, he presumes on the working of the laws of health. When he does anything, in short, he is simply putting some cause in motion from which he expects certain effects to follow through the working or certain natural laws. Effects always follow their causes, and they do so through the operation of natural laws. Let the distinction between natural laws, and other laws to be mentioned presently, be clearly apprehended, for in Plymouth theology the distinction is often forgotten, or else ignored.

It is of much importance, also, to observe that there exist certain mental and moral laws, the operation of which are natural in their



own particular spheres, just as the operation of the laws we have been noticing are natural in the physical sphere. For instance, there are laws which produce certain results *naturally* in connection with the working of the human mind, and in connection with the desires, emotions, affections, etc. We may not be able to trace all these laws and their operations, but they exist nevertheless, and we do know something of a few of them, and of the results of their working. We know, for instance, that friendship can never be founded on hatred. "Love begets love." Love is increased when expression is given to it in word and deed, and it becomes weak under a contrary course. "A whisperer separateth chief friends." Keep on slandering a man, and doing him wanton injury, and you will soon come to hate him.

There are also natural laws in the social sphere, as distinct from conventionalities, customs, etc. For instance, social intercourse cannot be properly founded on enmity, strife, suspicion, or ill-will, but on their very opposites. The constitution of the Church of Christ is founded on the existence of certain laws which operate naturally in the social, moral, and spiritual, relation of the members to each other. The Brethren forget this when they imagine that we ought not now to have office-bearers in the Church, merely because we have not apostles, nor apostles' delegates, to ordain them. If the existence of office-bearers interfered with the operation of the moral and spiritual laws, which operate naturally in the relations subsisting between the members of the Church, or in the relation subsisting between these members and God, such as that of freedom of personal access to God, then even apostles themselves would not have been set over God's people, and much more, they would not have appointed office-bearers in any church. The Church did not exist in the apostles' times for the sake of the apostles, but the apostles existed for the sake of the Church. The position of the Brethren in this matter is similar to that of farmers in a certain community, who, after a teacher of agriculture who had been commissioned to go to them to teach them agriculture had left, should say : We need not now treat the soil as our teacher did, because we have him not now with us to treat it in this way for us. How absurd it would be so to reason ! What had the teacher come to them for ? Not surely to change the nature of the laws the Creator had given to the soil, in order to make these laws suit his own individual method of operations, but to show the farmers what kind of treatment the natural laws already given to the soil demanded. Where do the apostles ever say that no office-bearers were to be ordained after the apostles' times ? Why do we follow the apostles' example in anything, except in those matters where we have express command to follow them ! Why do the Brethren themselves observe the Lord's day ? They adduce no other reason than the *example* of the apostles, not their precept. But this is only one instance out of hundreds in which the Brethren twist, take, or leave, Scripture, just as it suits their preconceived theories and wishes.

Moral and spiritual laws are operative with effects which follow *naturally* in their own particular spheres, just as we have been noticing is the case with natural laws in other spheres. Certain well-defined effects are produced on a man's soul through his wilful breach of the moral law, or any part of it, just as effects follow certain causes in the physical sphere by way of natural result. There are altogether three or four classes of results which follow wilful breaches of moral law. There are, first of all, the direct natural results, such as that unloving words and deeds increase hatred in the agent himself. Then there are also the searing of the conscience, and the hardening of the heart towards God, produced by the consciousness of having despised His rightful authority as Lawgiver. There is, likewise, from the same cause, a loss of that fear of the Lord which is the beginning, the very *sine qua non*, of wisdom, a loss in humility, etc., and a disposition so far fostered which makes other breaches easier. There is also the consciousness that God sees and confirms, and, as it were, seals all these natural effects as penal in their consequences. There is in addition, in the case of God's children, if they do not at once repent, the infliction of positive chastening in Providence to bring them to a sense of repentance, and to eventually issue in their purification, and in their greater watchfulness and care. And in the case of those who are not, and will not become, His children, there will be the ultimate infliction of positive punishment. Now, the first kind of effects mentioned are of a strictly natural kind, produced directly by their appropriate causes. The second kind are more or less of the same nature also. We shall see presently the importance of bearing the distinction in mind between natural effects and effects otherwise produced.

#### POSITIVE AND ARBITRARY LAWS.

In addition to the laws which we have mentioned, there exist also what are called positive laws, founded on the will of the lawgiver. Positive laws are alterable at discretion, and are usually abrogated when their purpose is finished. Such were the ceremonial, and many of the civil and criminal laws, of the ancient Jews. A law may be of a purely arbitrary character, proceeding from the mere whim or caprice of the one who imposes it, and serving no end whatever. If, for instance, a king should ordain that all his subjects should wear black clothing, without any reason for such law, we would say that the law was of an arbitrary nature. Positive laws have some definite end in view; arbitrary laws have not. All positive laws have an indirect moral element, when issuing from one who has a right to impose them, for disobedience to them in that case is a despising of the authority of the lawgiver, and this is a breach of moral law. Even arbitrary laws have this indirect moral element in similar circumstances.

PLYMOUTH CONFOUNDING OF NATURAL LAWS WITH POSITIVE  
OR ARBITRARY LAWS.

We have mentioned some laws which are natural in the physical sphere to illustrate those which are natural in their operations and result in the moral and spiritual spheres. We have mentioned positive and arbitrary laws to distinguish them from natural laws. Our chief concern here, however, is with laws which operate *naturally* in the production of their appropriate results in the moral spheres. The Brethren do not distinguish the laws which produce results *naturally* from positive and arbitrary laws. We have given one striking instance of this fact already. Several other instances may be given.

OTHER INSTANCES OF LAWS OPERATING NATURALLY.

The Brethren regard saving faith as if it were a positive or arbitrary law, imposed as a condition of salvation. They imagine that mere belief of the divine record of Christ's finished work is saving faith. But mere belief of news has no *natural* effect in producing union to Christ. If there be nothing more than mere belief of the news, there can be none of the special effects of true faith produced. This latter faith has a *natural* effect in producing the results ascribed to faith in the Word of God, just as the soil raises the crop naturally. But mere belief of news has no natural nor moral effect in such a direction; for a man could not help believing news, provided he had sufficient evidence of its truth. Often the Brethren writers labor to produce belief in the news of Christ's finished work, as if it were a common thing among those whom they are accustomed to address, to deny the authenticity of the gospel news. Their labor is superfluous. Granted that a man believes this news as firmly as it is possible for him to do, after the Brethren have plied him with all their arguments to show that God is not telling a lie, even then the belief so produced, although it should amount to the most perfect assurance, and heard from the Brethren's own very mouths, can never produce the effect of true saving faith.

Again, the Brethren are of the opinion that although the Old Testament saints were saved by faith in Christ, yet they were not, and never will be, united to Him. In this strange view the natural effect of true faith is overlooked, or else cannot be comprehended. The Brethren also think it was quite right for David and Old Testament saints to pray for pardon, but not right for a Christian now to do so. In this short-sighted view there is a non-apprehension of the laying-hold influence of true prayer. The opinion betrays a lamentable want of true Christian experience. Do they imagine they will get people of experience to believe that they have not got what they thus asked for, and were enabled in the very asking to lay hold of? Will they induce these people to imagine that they were deluded in thinking themselves often enabled through the

very asking to lay hold by faith on the very thing they asked for? The Brethren labor in vain, and worse than in vain, when they expect to contradict common Christian experience.

The Brethren imagine that they can "count" themselves holy and perfect with Christ's holiness and perfection, and thus through our Lord's personal attributes being imputed to them, they are as fit for heaven now as ever they can be made.\* This opinion contradicts common-sense, as well as being contrary to the proper view of the operation and effects of the natural laws in the moral and spiritual spheres, as previously described. No man could possibly be holy or pure with the holiness or purity of another, any more than one object could be white with the whiteness of another. Christ's righteousness being imputed to the believer means that divine justice has been satisfied for him, which is a very different thing from saying that the believer could be holy with Christ's holiness. A white man could pay a negro's debts, but this would be very different from the negro being white with the white man's whiteness. In this strange and irrational view of the Brethren there is also overlooked the fact that communion with God is founded on similarity of moral and spiritual disposition. Perfect communion implies perfect affinity and congeniality. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. It will never do for the Brethren to imagine that the great change produced in the process of sanctification, as sanctification is viewed by the great majority of Christians, can be effected by their "counting," or "reckoning," themselves holy, as they say, with the holiness of Christ. They ought to take heed lest their whole salvation be not at last found to be a vain "counting" of themselves saved, and their supposed fellowship with God only a dream.

#### OVERLOOKING NATURAL RESULTS OF LAW PRODUCES A LEGAL SPIRIT.

Among other evil and dangerous effects produced by the overlooking of the *natural* results produced by the operation of certain laws in the moral and spiritual spheres, is the evil of begetting and fostering a legal spirit. If once we come to imagine that God has prescribed some positive or arbitrary laws as a condition to be observed for salvation, the next step naturally is to endeavor to perform the condition, or go through with the law, so as to put ourselves in the relation to Him of claiming the promised reward. This is the conception of the legal spirit. The legal spirit says, "I have now done it," no matter what the "it" may refer to. But you may have done the "it" you refer to, and yet be not a whit nearer God. If a master should say to his servant, "You must stand on your head for five minutes every morning as a condition of getting your break-

\* "All believers . . . are as meet for heaven now as ever they will be, even if they lived the most holy lives for fifty years after their spiritual birth."  
—*British Evangelist*, March 16th, 1874—a Plymouth periodical.

fast," the servant might perform the condition, and yet be no nearer being like his master than before. But if his master should say to him, "Do kind deeds, speak kind words, be truthful, upright and sincere, and you will learn to be like me," the servant would find that the line of conduct prescribed, when carried out, would make him more and more like his master *by natural effect*. His master's spirit would grow in him. In the case of the sinner there requires to be, first, the desire created to be like the Master. This is done in the new birth. But if the sinner finds that he has accepted Christ as He is offered, he ought to accept Christ's commands, and do as He did,—learn of Him, and he will know the truth experimentally, and the truth thus known will make him free.

It is through an entire misapprehension of the nature, uses and effects of the observance of the moral law, that the Brethren imagine the Christian to be free from this law as a rule of life. The moral law is absolutely essential for the very existence of the spiritual life. Unless the forces or dynamics of the spiritual life act in moral law, like a liquid flowing in a definite channel, they cannot act at all as spiritually good forces.

## XIX.

### LIFE, LIGHT, LAW AND LEARNING.

(Continued.)

#### LAWS OF PERSONAL UNION AND COMMUNION BETWEEN MORAL BEINGS.

**I**N heaven above there will exist a perfect union and communion between Christ and His people, and also between His people among themselves. Christ's people, after being called, are being brought by degrees here below into that condition in which they will be capable of sustaining their part perfectly in the union and communion above. Love is, indeed, an indispensable requisite for this union and communion. But this love when perfect must be perfectly moral. It can be perfectly exercised only in terms of the moral law. Antinomianism is directly antagonistic to, and destructive of, its nature.

Some of the ancients had a proverb which said: *Respice Finem*—Look to the end. The chief end in view man-ward in the Christian religion, and the process of evangelized man's preparation for that end, may be easily seen to harmonize, and to shed light upon each other. The gospel aim in regard to man is to bring him into the relation of perfect union and communion with God. If man is brought into the necessary condition for performing his part in sustaining this relation, then all other objects included in his chief end will be fulfilled. In the gospel process for bringing man to this end, there are prescribed for his observance, or exercise, many of the conditions, principles, and other elements, which enter as essentials into the sustenance of the final perfect relation. Glory is but the completion of the process begun in grace, as the splendor of the meridian sun is the culmination of the process initiated when the first streak of light breaks in upon the midnight darkness.

The nature of a personal union between two moral and spiritual beings is essentially different from the nature of the union between two material objects. In the former kind of union each of the parties, in a free, conscious, voluntary, rational, and moral manner, performs his part in acceptance of the conditions of the union, entering upon it, and sustaining it. "Abide in me and I in you," said our Lord. We first receive Christ Jesus as our Lord, and then we walk in Him. (Col. ii. 6.)

It is of the first importance to observe, that the relation of perfect

personal union and communion between two moral beings cannot be sustained unless there be, by each of the parties, a knowledge and a conservation of the rights of the other. This holds true whether the rights be inherent and natural, as in the case of God, or whether they be derived, as in man's case. If a union of this kind be even intelligently and properly *entered* upon, there must be previously on each side a knowledge of, and a willingness to respect and conserve, the rights of the other. Christ must be received as Lord, as well as Bridegroom. If we receive one, but not as he is, or not as he offers himself, we practically receive a different person in our hearts to the one we formally receive.

It is not needful at present to consider how God performs His part in sustaining the union with His people which has been described. But one essential and all-important part on their side in sustaining perfect personal union and communion with God, will be the making and sustaining of a suitable and perfect response to all the revelations and communications of Himself made by Him to them. If man is able thus to respond, he must *see* what will call forth the response, and in order to see to the extent his faculties will admit, his soul must be expanded, made perfectly pure, and must possess a perfect affinity with God.

The unrenewed man is spiritually dead. He cannot respond to what is in God. His soul cannot go out God-ward. Its affections carry it in a different direction, away from the source of life and light. In regeneration God bestows upon man spirit-life, but only in germ. In this life are certain energies, or moving-forces, as already described, from which certain activities God-ward result. It is, through these, responsive to God. These are at first like the little leaven hid in the large lump, which contains many antagonistic forces and elements. The leavening of the whole requires time, assimilation, and exercise. The new life with its energies forms the regenerate man's working capital, and with this he is bidden go work in God's vineyard, and increase his Master's goods. If he is faithful, he will at last return with more talents. He will have an increased life, an expanded soul, and an extended capacity; and will thus enter into the joy of his Lord with advantage, increased in proportion to his faithfulness.

Let us look for a little further at some things implied in the perfected relationship of union and communion between God and His people when the salvation of the latter will be completed. The nature of this relation depends, on the one hand, upon what God is in himself, what He is to His people, and what He will have done for them, and will depend, on the other hand, on what man is in himself, and what he will have done God-ward. There are two great and important truths which ought to be distinguished from each other in the consideration of what God is in himself. The first is, that God is the Lord, or, which is the same thing, that the Lord, He is God. In this is implied that He has absolute and rightful authority over all His creatures. He is Sovereign Ruler in heaven and on earth. He is

seated on the highest throne. There is no one higher than He to call His procedure in question. This great truth, so readily admitted by all, is often lost sight of, and so also are other great truths directly deducible from it frequently kept out of view. In several parts of Scripture, the dealing of God with His people is represented as having for its object the bringing of them to the memory, acknowledgment, and realization, of the great and foundation truth that God is the Lord. In parts of the book of Ezekiel, for instance, the words are adopted as a kind of refrain after a description of the contemplated dealings of God with His people: "Then shall Israel know that I am the Lord." The final result of God's dealings with Manasseh is expressed in the words: "Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God." (2 Chron. xxxiii. 13.)

If, then, God is the Lord, Sovereign and Absolute Ruler, this fact calls for suitable response on the part of man. Man ought to be aware of the fact, be suitably and perfectly affected by it, and give expression in the proper manner to what he thus knows and feels. But the divine authority is not an authority in name merely. God *exercises* His authority. He issues commands to man. If man is properly responsive to God's authority, he will be so also to all the commands issued in the exercise thereof. He will seek to acquaint himself properly with these commands, and seek also to render them humble, submissive, cheerful, sincere, and perfect obedience. He will know that all God's commands are just, given in authority, and meant to be perfectly obeyed; and, further, that obedience to them is meant to bring its own natural reward, by way of fitting him more and more for the relationship of perfect union and communion with his Maker. God's commands are all perfect. "God's law is perfect," says the Psalmist. In this is implied that the divine commands are suited exactly and perfectly, just as given, for the ends for which He gave them; and if they are so, they cannot be disobeyed in any degree without there being a shortcoming of some kind and degree in securing these ends. Further, if God's commands are all just, it is implied in this that man in a perfect state would be able, and ought, to keep them perfectly. If he should wilfully transgress any of them, he not only would not reap the advantage to be secured from their perfect observance, but he would also despise the divine authority.

Should there be no help for man after his disobedience, he would have to endure the penal consequences of despising the divine authority, and suffer also the deprivation of the blessings which had been intended to follow as the direct result of obedience. Part of these consequences would be the deprivation of capacity to love, or desire to keep, the divine commands in future. He would be thus lost to union and communion with God. But if restored through God's help, the restoration would not imply that God's authority over him would be changed, or would be less complete, nor that the essential elements implied in a perfect relation of union or communion between God and him should be changed in any way. God would be still on the throne, and His nature and rights would not be altered in the



least degree. God is unchangeable. There still could be no perfect relation of union and communion between God and man except from the respective positions of each. God's rights must be still conserved, and man must be still sensible of, properly affected by, and perfectly responsive to, these inalienable rights.

If fallen man's restoration was to be in any sense gradual, then it might be naturally expected that in the economy under which the process of restoration was to take place, there should be additional commands given him bearing on the manner in which he was to conduct himself under the restorative process, and bearing also on the additional feelings he ought to entertain in view of what had been done, and was now being conducted, by divine agency in affecting complete restoration. Under the economy of restoration, moreover, there must be some provision for dealing with man's present incapacity to properly respect the divine authority and command. This provision must be of such a nature as will not blind man to his true state and character, and will also keep God's position, character, and rights, before him in the restorative process.

But let it be observed that these extra commands and provisions, bearing on the fact and period of restoration, are never meant to *supersede* anything whatever in the original position. What is extra does not supersede. The original position, and the commands issued in the exercise of divine authority for the maintenance of that position, can never be changed, for the essential nature of a perfect relationship between God and man could not admit of any change. If the restored love contain the element of gratitude for restoration, this can never eliminate from it the element of obedience to moral law.

If a man should attempt to commit *felo-de-se*, and in his attempt should deprive himself of his health and his eyesight, and should be arrested and imprisoned for thus breaking the law which prohibits such things, and if, according to the illustration already given, a wealthy and kind physician should procure his release from prison, and should prescribe certain medicine, diet, and exercise for the man's restoration; when the man should thus be in process of restoration, or after being completely restored, surely it would not be meant that he might then despise the law of the land, and the laws of health, and could then see without light, and in a different way from that in which other people see who had never committed a similar crime. On the contrary, it would be meant in his restoration that he should be more careful than ever in his observing the laws of the land, the laws of health and sight. It is similar with the one who has been restored to perfect relationship of union and communion with God. He ought to be if possible even more careful than before he fell in his observance of the essential laws of such relationship.

#### RESPONSIVENESS TO WHO GOD IS, AS WELL AS TO WHAT HE IS.

But not only is it the case that God is, and for ever will unchangeably remain, the Lord, but He is also a God Who is infinitely exalted above man in His glory, majesty, moral and spiritual excellence, and

is infinite in His holiness, justice, faithfulness, truth, love, and compassion. He is also omniscient and omnipresent and omnipotent. All these attributes call for suitable response on the part of man in the relationship of perfect union and communion. In perfect response are included humility, adoration, love, worship, and service, and all of a perfect and completely sustained kind. God is also He in Whom we live, move, and have our being and well-being. We are absolutely dependent on Him. He is the only suitable and sufficient portion for the soul. All this also calls for perfect response on the part of man, response in feeling, and in perfect and appropriate activity. Man must not, in perfect relationship, be without a knowledge of these things; he must acknowledge with gratitude and joy his dependence, must make God the everlasting portion of His soul, and seek everything else from and in Him. He must know and realize *Who* God is, as well as grow in knowledge and realization of *What* He is. "Believe in the works," said our Lord, virtually, "that ye may attain to a realization of *What I am.*"

#### FRESH REVELATION CALLS FOR FRESH RESPONSIVENESS.

Every revelation which God makes of himself to man calls for suitable response on man's part. Unless there be such response on man's part, even here in the period of restoration, there is danger of hardening influences coming over man's heart. That which prevents suitable response is a wandering heart in other loves. In Romans i. we read of those who were given over to a reprobate mind, because they glorified not God when they saw the revelation He had made of Himself in the works of creation. In every coming of God to man with fresh revelations of Himself, there has been a previous bringing down of mountains of pride and self-exaltation, valleys have been exalted, crooked things made straight, and rough places plain. The way of the Lord had thus to be prepared ere His glory could be seen with due responsiveness, and, therefore, with safety. Malachi predicts the coming of Elijah to do preparative work of this kind, lest when the Lord should come with fresh revelation, the result should be an additional blindness—and thus a smiting of the earth with a curse, instead of the revelation proving a blessing. Those who did not submit to the preparative process initiated by John the Baptist, were blinded by the great revelation made in the coming of our Lord. Upon them the light operated as a judgment. God will be sanctified in all that come nigh Him. At every nearer approach of the Most High, man must all the more earnestly seek to understand and occupy his true position before Him. This is true whether God approach, and additional light be obtained, in the Bible, Providence, or in the sermon. He does not approach that man may gratify his curiosity merely, in looking upon the light He gives, as the men of Bethshemesh looked into the ark. To him that responds, and uses properly what he receives, shall more be given at every approach. From him that hath not, or is not prepared by having used what he had given him,

will be taken away at every approach, even that which he seemeth to have. These things are mentioned as evidences of the truth that man in a perfect relationship of union and communion with God must be perfectly responsive to all that God reveals himself to be. How many of the psalms call for responsiveness to the knowledge of the Lord which He may communicate as the result of efforts, it may be, to obtain this knowledge.

“ Know that the Lord our God is good ;  
 Without our aid He did us make.  
 We are His flock He doth us feed,  
 And for His sheep He doth us take,  
 O enter then His gates with praise,  
 Approach with joy His courts unto,  
 Praise, laud and bless His name always,  
 For it is seemly so to do.”

There is first the knowledge, and then the suitable response. But the response must be of the proper kind, in full view and heart-realization of the position, attributes, works, and rights, of the One to whom the response is made, and in view also of what our own position and character are.

It may be thought by some that for man to observe the conditions of perfect relationship with God in the perfect manner described, would be *here*, at least, an impossible task. Probably some could not think of doing so in glory itself, without feeling as if the greatness of the change implied in their being brought to such a condition, would involve the turning of them into something which they could not recognize as themselves. Those who thus fear, ought to see to it that they be not entire strangers to this attitude towards God, which will be consummated in glory. But God gives grace, in the form of moving power and strength. Even here, those that wait on Him will renew their strength, and will mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint. They shall run in the way of the divine commands when He enlarges their heart. They can do all things through Christ strengthening them.

But He will not give such a force of moving power as will blind man, or supersede the necessity of his being properly impressed with the solemn fact that God is His Lord. He must maintain the sense of this fact in all due reverence, godly fear, and solemnity, upon his heart and conscience. Man's approaches to God, even in the strength of the grace He himself supplies, must not be rash, unduly bold, nor in any way unwarrantable. Neither ought it, on the other hand, to be servile. Now, if what has been said about the Christian's relation to God be true, it may easily be seen that the moral law can never pass away. The very essence of the moral law is included in the exhortation, “ Be still and know that I am God.” (Psa. xlvi. 10.) The perfect fellowship described can be sustained only in the perfect observance of the moral.

## A LAW OF PRAYER.

One law of prayer is, "Ask and it shall be given you." This rule applies specially to asking for the Holy Spirit. So our Lord informs us. But here is what one Brother says:—

"If the Spirit be addressed in prayer, or in hymns, the rational consequence is almost blasphemy. . . . If you pray for the Spirit, you virtually deny that you are Christ's. . . . The Spirit having been given, it is mockery to ask God to repeat the gift. . . . Dear Brethren, prayer for the Spirit is unscriptural." (Brethren Tract.)

This is terrible teaching. The Holy Spirit was given under the Old Dispensation as well as under the New. David prayed for this Spirit. (Psa. li.) God promised to pour it out on obedient ones in the Old Dispensation. (Prov. i.) Peter tells us that holy men of old were moved by this Spirit, and spake as He gave them utterance. Yet the Brethren imagine, apparently, or speak as if they did, that the Spirit had not been given until Pentecost.

Paul prayed that the Spirit might be given to the Ephesians to open their eyes, and he likewise requested the Ephesian Christians to pray for him, that he might open his mouth boldly in preaching. (Eph. i. 6.) He desires the prayers of every body of Christians to whom he wrote, so that the Word of God might be properly preached by him, and have free course and be glorified. And it is the Holy Spirit that enabled Paul to preach, and it is the same Spirit that enables preachers still to do their duty in proclaiming the Gospel.

Further, every time there is exhortation given in Scripture to pray for any kind of grace, there is indirect exhortation given to pray for the Spirit, for it is He that gives grace and carries on the entire work of salvation in the Christian. The Brethren, unfortunately, seem blind to all this, notwithstanding the clear manner in which it is all set forth in Scripture. How can they expect to be guided by the Holy Spirit?

The teaching of the Brethren is equally absurd when they direct the one who is not a Christian not to pray at all. Simon Magus was directed by Peter to pray, although still "in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." God answered even the prayer of Ahab himself, and the indirect prayer even of Cain. If an unconverted man has no right to pray, he has none to come to Christ. How strange that a man should be invited to come to Christ, and yet must not speak to Him till he is sure he has come.

The Brethren imagine that a Christian ought to have nothing to do with politics, nor with public offices. They imagine that all these are included in the world from which the Christian is commanded to be separate. Yet the apostles command us to pray for magistrates, and for all in authority. The Bible tells us that the "powers that be" are ordained of God. Are we to have only the emissaries of Satan as our lawmakers, and in our public offices, and is it for them

we are exhorted to pray? Are we to pray that they may be guided by the Spirit, when it is wrong to pray for the Spirit, according to the teaching of the Brethren, and since all the emissaries of Satan resist the Holy Spirit? Is it best that every country leave its laws about marriage, the Sabbath, and the natural rights of man, etc., to be enacted by the devil's agents, and that the enforcement of these laws should also be left to these agents, so that under them we may "lead peaceable and quiet lives"? What would become of our country were it left to the tender mercies of the Brethren? It is useless to point out to the Brethren that if politics and public offices were inconsistent in their nature with godliness, none of God's people would ever, even under the Old Dispensation, have been politicians, or appointed to such offices. But here again the Brethren cannot distinguish between laws that are positive and those which operate naturally.\*

#### ORDER IS HEAVEN'S FIRST LAW.

The apostle says, "Let all things be done decently and in order." He referred to "things" within the Church. But the Brethren think all such organization is wrong. But what is organization in the Church? It is simply the appointment of time, order, and office. Organization is the method which the Church has of expressing the life of its members. We cannot express ourselves outwardly in speech or action, so as to be understood by others, unless we do so by some kind of language, or other signs, which they can understand. And is it not better that our expression should be orderly? Have the Brethren themselves any order in their meetings? Have they any set time of meeting, or do they wait until the Spirit move them each one to go to the meeting? And after they assemble, do they ever begin with the concluding benediction. The fact appears to be that the Brethren speak and write at random, and do not seem ever to think what absurdities are included in all their theories.

\*"Jesus, then, was not a politician. Am I a disciple of His? Neither then am I to be one. . . . To be engaged in politics, therefore, either as an actor or speaker, is no part of my duty as a Christian. . . . God challenges vengeance as His own. 'Vengeance is *Mine*;' it is not, therefore, His saints' office. But the magistrate is a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." (Brethren's Tract, entitled "The Christian and Politics.") There is very much more such ridiculous teaching in this and other Brethren tracts on the subject. A magistrate does the unlawful thing of exercising vengeance, therefore let the magistrate be a devil's agent, and pray for him!

## XX.

### *LIFE, LIGHT, LAW AND LEARNING.*

*(Continued.)*

#### LEARNING.

THE spiritually living soul, along with its dynamics and internal lights, is given a sphere of action here below, in order to build up its character, and prepare it for its destiny. In this sphere the living soul has, as we have seen, many external means for increasing its light. It is also surrounded with a network of various kinds of laws, amid which it is called on to move and be exercised. By the soul's exercises in ascertaining what these laws are, and moving in accord with them, it will have the various graces of the Christian character developed, and made more readily, cheerfully, and gracefully, responsive to whatever ought to call them into exercise. The unworthy feelings, by coming to be better ascertained through the various kinds of light mentioned, by coming in contact with laws which develop the opposite feelings, by direct self-denial, and by the Holy Spirit blessing all the soul's efforts, will undergo a process which will eventually terminate in their extinction.

#### WHAT IS LEARNING?

Let us now look at this learning from which the Brethren appear to shrink so much, and which they seem to imagine cannot co-exist with the grace of God, or at least can be of no service to this grace. What, then, is learning, and what connection has it, or can it be made to have, with the Christian religion? In its most comprehensive sense, learning may be regarded as forming no inconsiderable part of our salvation itself. Scripture represents salvation as a translation from darkness into light. And light, from whatever source it may come, is a deliverance from darkness and ignorance, and from their frequently concomitant evils of superstition, narrow-mindedness, bigotry, prejudice, and fanaticism.

Learning, in its widest sense, and as embracing education, includes the possession of extensive and varied information and knowledge, together with an acquired aptitude for increasing these in any direction; and also a facility in using to profit and advantage the information and knowledge thus obtained. Learning includes, also, such a trained condition of the affections, feelings, sentiments, desires, emotions, impulses, and passions, as that the exercise of these are

under proper control, and that the virtuous affections and emotions are called forth in proper strength and steadfastness, and with spontaneity and gracefulness in their various ways of expressing themselves, on every occasion on which they ought to be called forth. A man of true learning, therefore, is also a man of culture. True learning develops the soul in the direction in which, from its constitution as a soul, it ought to grow; and fits a man much better than darkness and ignorance for understanding, glorifying, and enjoying, his Maker, for being exercised in his various duties and privileges here, and for a happy home hereafter.

### THE DAILY OCCUPATION IMPARTS LEARNING.

In a civilized country, a man can, with the aid of the common school at the outset, secure a considerable amount of the very best learning, provided he be diligent, and have his efforts wisely directed. He has for this end, his daily occupation, intercourse with his fellows, his private reading and study, and the many interesting matters that may occupy his attention aside from his daily calling. It is not merely the amount of knowledge which a man may thus obtain that helps to give him a learning, but also the efforts he makes to obtain the knowledge and information which he may thus secure. His seeking for information, reflecting on the information, planning, forming theories, testing them in practice, etc., give a man the best kind of assimilated information and knowledge. By practice he becomes expert, and his information becomes, as it were, part of the very fibre of his soul, just as the food taken becomes part of the body. A man may not, indeed, be conscious of the process of soul-expansion and development which thus goes on, any more than he feels the growing process of the body. He may, however, see the results in each case after some time. But whilst the processes are being conducted, the man may be conscious only of a craving or desire, and this is what the Creator designed to set and keep the man agoing, that he may receive development in soul and body from "corresponding with his environments," as some scientists would say.

In a civilized country, the comparatively high plane on which all its trade, commerce, and occupations, are conducted, requires some considerable thought and concentration, intelligence and alertness, in a man, in order to keep abreast of his fellows. All this contributes to teach him knowledge and self-control. As previously observed, our Creator did not write treatises for us on chemistry, agriculture, navigation, the steam-engine, the printing-press, or mechanics. We are not born with a knowledge of reading, writing, or arithmetic. Our Creator did not build our houses, ships, or bridges, for us, cultivate our lands, nor tell us any of Nature's secrets or laws. He has given us the materials, and bids us work at them, study them, arrange them, and make them yield their secrets. He bids us do all this for our development, mentally, morally, and physically; and He has very abundantly blessed man's diligence in these directions. If any man

will not work, neither should he eat. If any provideth not for his own, and specially for those of his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do all to the glory of God. Christian servants, in serving their masters according to the flesh, are serving the Lord Christ, and of Him will receive the reward of the inheritance—not the reward of merit, but that of result; they shall, through the information and self-control obtained by working at their daily business on Christian principles, prepare themselves for the inheritance; they shall, as it were, work it into their souls.

“The trivial round, the common task,  
Will furnish all we ought to ask.”

He that does not understand how to treat properly the earthly circumstances in the midst of which God has placed him for his development in soul and body, or is too slothful to use them properly, how can he understand higher matters? If he cannot apprehend, nor believe, the meaning of earthly things, how can he understand or believe if he be told about more spiritual matters? Some men have a craving for fleeing to the comforts, elevations, and pleasurable excitements, of the unseen, without undergoing the necessary preparation for these. The Word of God often exhorts us to be unworldly, but nowhere does it tell us to be unearthly.

#### AN EDUCATED MAN BEST FITTED TO BE A BIBLE STUDENT.

A man educated in the manner described, can turn his attention to any pursuit with far more hope of success, whether it be Bible study or anything else, than the one who passes his time as an idle, slothful, imaginative, man, permitting the soil of the heart to grow its native weeds apace, and to bring forth superstitions and fanaticisms. What a man can attain to as a diligent citizen of a civilized country, may be seen if we think of all the intelligence he would be likely to exercise, and all the profit that possibly might accrue to him, from being present at, say, some political meeting in this country, compared with the results in the case of a Hottentot from the wilds of Africa, were he to be present at the same meeting. But if learning can be of no service, but a hindrance, to grace, as the Brethren seem to think, then this Hottentot would be in far more favorable circumstances to begin as a preacher of the Gospel than the man who has finished his course at a university and at a divinity college. The change undergone by a Hottentot before he would come abreast of the average education of this country, would be much greater than that undergone by a young man preparing for one of “the learned professions,” and having finished his university course. If the Brethren were in the wilds of Africa, they ought, to be self-consistent, to advocate no education for the natives there as a preparation for the better understanding of the Gospel. But we know that the greatest missionaries, including the



famous Dr. Duff, have strenuously pled for a secular education being given to the heathen to develop their minds, as a preparation for the better perception of the Gospel.

Rabbi Daniel, of Persia, now a student of Knox College, Toronto, told some of his audiences, in a recent lecturing tour in this province, that he had been once laboring among a people that could not be got to remember the petitions of the Lord's prayer, unless some such device were adopted as giving each petition as a name to a sheep, so that when all the sheep went past in order before the learner, he could thus correctly repeat the prayer. On one particular occasion, when a sheep died, the petition was for long left out, without the discovery of the cause. Would "C. H. M." suppose that such learners, and at the outset, would make better preachers of the Gospel than those who have the learning of the colleges and the grace of God combined? No one has ever supposed that the learning of a university can impart the grace of God. As already observed, no one is ever understood to begin studying for the Christian ministry until he has satisfied both himself, and also competent examiners, as to his possession of divine grace. Matters are not left, as with the Brethren, to the mere popping up at a meeting on the part of any one who may imagine himself to be in the possession of every necessary qualification. Have the Brethren any conception as to who have been most used by God as the leaders of great religious movements? Have they been men of learning or of ignorance? Whom does our Lord seem to be using most for such work? We cannot properly infer that the apostles had no education, from the mere circumstance that two of them on a certain occasion were said to be unlettered men. All that can be inferred from this statement is, that they did not choose to set their arguments forth in the style common among the schools of rhetoric of their day, but not that they were void of education. In fact, the three years' teaching they enjoyed under the great Teacher would of itself have strengthened their minds in the very direction in which a university training does the same to men now, and such strengthening would have prepared them all the better to apprehend teaching on more directly spiritual matters, and remove them all the further from the position of requiring anything like a sheep to enable them to remember the petitions of the Lord's prayer.\*

Not so very many years ago the amount of learning possessed to-day by an average citizen of a civilized country would have been reckoned prodigious. If the Brethren of the present day had been then living, they would surely have urged that learning to read and write might be very effective to help people "to figure before the world," but of no use whatever to a preacher of the Gospel.

Have the Brethren any conception of the enormous amount of learning and labor that were expended in giving us our present English Bibles? If not, they ought to set themselves to ascertain, and for

\*There is little doubt but that in the "schools of the prophets," a liberal general education was given.

ever cease their tirades against learning in connection with religion. To utter diatribes against learning is simply to glory in one's shame. The very thing the Brethren leaders need is just more learning, or more attention to their daily calling, to give them better developed minds, with more of common-sense, and more ability to draw sounder conclusions from the material with which they take upon themselves sometimes to work.

A university training is just only training somewhat more advanced, and more comprehensive, than is to be got by diligent attention to one's duties in life, as already described. Students when finished with their university course are frequently urged to remember that their education is only just beginning. But the common school and the "daily round," diligently and faithfully attended to, will furnish most men with all the learning they require, and not a few with all they could ever receive. Let us pray for our colleges and universities rather than endeavor to raise and foster ignorant prejudices against them.

The Brethren sometimes ask in derision whether it requires one to go to a college in order to be made a Christian. No one ever supposed it does, and only those who really cannot observe and reflect properly would ever imagine that any one ever did so suppose. One verse in the Bible might be the means of converting the soul, but is the converted man for evermore therefore to confine himself to that one verse? As well teach that all the infant has to do is to be born into the world, and that without food, thought, or exercise, it will grow up to the full stature of manhood. But especially is it incumbent on those who are to be useful in the present day to all classes of Christians in the way of Scripture teaching and exposition, to have their minds stored with suitable information, have a trained capacity to acquire further information readily, and to use properly whatever they may possess in this way. Surely this is infinitely better than to find a professed preacher of the blessed Gospel setting a premium on ignorance, sadly misinterpreting the Word of God, and holding ridiculous and grotesque views on Christianity, such as many of the views of the Brethren really are.

The soul requires light as surely as it requires heat, information and knowledge as certainly as feeling; and unless it has proper light it cannot have the proper heat. The feelings are not moral, nor the reverse, in themselves. They require the operations of light and of conscience to make them moral. We require thinking in the spiritual sphere as well as in the secular one, and thinking in the latter will form one of the best qualifications for similar exercises in the former. If this were not the case, it is not likely our Creator would ever place us in the so-called secular sphere, and require us to be diligent therein. In fact, there is nothing really secular to the Christian. And God speaks to him in the events of ordinary providence as truly as in the Bible; and in the ordinary affairs of life, moreover, he has his graces tested and developed. It is, of course, the Christian we are here contemplating all along. But even in the case of the

unrenewed, but otherwise intelligent man, all that in his case is required is to have created within him an affinity with spiritual matters, a great work indeed, accomplished in the new birth; but when this is accomplished, he will, with the materials before him, soon be a very much more advanced and useful Christian than the man who thinks learning useless in connection with religion, who makes little or no effort either to think or to learn, and who assumes an abnormal and unhealthy attitude towards the things of earth in the midst of which his Creator has placed him. "There is nothing so terrible," says Goethe, "as active ignorance." Light is always felt to be tyrannical to misleaders and evil designers. "Ignorance is the mother of devotion," says the Romanist. Learning may be good for "figuring before the world," says the Plymouthist, but is good for nothing in religion.

We might, indeed, assume that devotees of false religions, and of false forms of the true religion, would have an antipathy to any light that shows what their religion really is. And we might also expect that those whose minds are not properly opened up would look upon universities almost as places where secret intrigues are hatched for successfully imposing on a simple public, just as the inhabitants of heathen countries have the strongest suspicions when they see what are really the results of civilization in their visitors from civilized countries. Some Brethren profess horror at the Darwinian theory of man having descended from the ape, but really their ideas of learning would go a long way, if true, to prove the theory.

As the light and heat of our present coal fires are just the light and heat received from the sun by vegetables millenniums ago, and treasured up ever since in the bowels of the earth, so the light received now, assimilated by practice, and tempered by properly regulated heat, in the case of the Christian who faithfully does his duty here below, are just the light and heat that will shine and glow for ever above. Diligent discharge of duty under proper Christian principles, will help to maintain a heat of the proper kind and degree, otherwise the heat of the feelings will have the tendency to act as the frost on the window on a winter night. "On a winter's morning," says a modern writer, "the frost upon the window shows forth trees, houses, thrones, castles, cities, but these are only frost. So before the mind the imagination hangs pictures of the glory and grandeur and godlikeness of the higher life, but one breath of temptation proves their evanescence."

#### NEWELL DWIGHT HILLIS ON EDUCATION.

Let us quote a few pertinent sentences from a modern work, entitled "A Man's Value to Society," by Newell Dwight Hillis:—

"In the final analysis it is ignorance that wastes; it is knowledge that saves; it is wisdom that gives precedence. If sleep is the brother of death, ignorance is the full brother to both sleep and death. An untaught faculty is at once quiescent and dead. An

ignorant man has been defined as one 'whom God has packed up and men have not unfolded.' . . . An educated mind is one fully awakened to all the sights and scenes and forces in the world through which he moves. . . . Education is mind-husbandry. The primary fountains of a nation's wealth are not in fields and forests and mines, but in free schools, churches and printing presses. Ignorance breeds misery, vice and crime. History knows no illiterate seer or sage or saint. No Dante or Shakespeare ever had to make his X mark."

"The sure foundations of states are laid in knowledge, not in ignorance; and every sneer at education, at book learning, which is the recorded wisdom of the experience of mankind, is the demagogue's sneer at intelligent liberty, inviting national degeneration and ruin. . . . Each child is unique. The school is to help the boy unpack what intellectual tools he has. Education does not change, but puts temper into these tools. For all things are first thoughts. Tools, fabrics, ships, houses, books are first ideas, afterwards crystallised into outer form. Sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny. Life's one task is the making of manhood. Our world is a college, events are teachers, happiness is the graduating point, character is the diploma God gives man. . . . Character has been defined as the joint product of nature and nurture. Nature gives the raw material; character is the carved statue. Nature gives trees, not tools; forests, not furniture. Thus nature furnishes man with the perfect materials and environments; man must work up these materials into the qualities called industry, integrity, honor, truth and love, ever patterning after that ideal man, Jesus Christ, ever breathing forth His spirit. . . . The teachers which shape the soul include home, friendship, occupation, travel, success, love, grief and death."

The learning obtained in the manner thus described, is a learning which proceeds on the same lines as that received in our universities. The latter learning professes to assist in securing the true learning from life. God has abundantly blessed man's efforts when diligently and faithfully exercised in the midst of the providential circumstances where he has been placed. And what God has thus shown He has cleansed and blessed, it does not become Plymouthist nor Romanist to sneer at, nor regard as common or unclean.

#### REGULATED HEAT REQUIRED IN EDUCATION AS WELL AS LIGHT.

But the obtaining of knowledge and information, though very important, is only one part of education. The attainment of a condition of the feelings, such as has been already described, is certainly not the less important part of a true education. Man is meant for society, both here and hereafter, and a very considerable part of his preparation for his society hereafter is got from his chosen and sustained relation to society here. And this relation here will depend

almost entirely on the kind of feelings which he cultivates. Moreover, a man's own soul could not be truly *developed* without proper attention to the feelings. Vegetables require both light and heat for their growth, and so do souls.

The feelings require the very greatest care in their management. This is specially true of the religious affections, on account of the readiness with which a great many people imagine their feelings are operated upon by agencies belonging to the spiritual world, when all that may be affecting these feelings are simply the fancies of the people themselves. It is a matter of revelation that real agencies from the unseen world do operate on people's feelings here, and that some of these agencies are benevolent and others are the reverse. And, further, those that are malevolent can assume the form of benevolent ones. The spiritual world is physically unseen, and a man can think and say a great deal about his assurances of being highly favored, and spiritually safe, on account of what he finds in his feelings, and at the same time his thoughts and statements may not be very easily susceptible of proof. He may thus impose both upon himself and others.

Considerable knowledge is therefore required, and the greatest care in supplying it, in order to educate the soul properly on the side of feelings, especially feelings connected with religion. And a Christian's feelings ought to be all of a Christian temper. As already described, the feelings are in themselves neither moral nor the opposite. They require the operations of knowledge and conscience to make them either the one or the other. They may attach themselves to an object with a degree of strength greatly beyond what is apprehended of real merit, or even attractiveness, in the object. They may be wrought up by the imagination. In this case they are more or less abnormal. The affections may be also attached to an object of the very highest merit and attractiveness, and yet the attachment may not be caused by a real apprehension of these qualities in the object, but by an imaginary apprehension of other qualities that do not really exist. We have an instance of this peculiar phenomenon in the case of the multitude who followed our Lord (John vi.) and desired to make him king. It is to be apprehended that several marriages are entered upon from a similar cause. The real merits of meritorious objects ought to be as far as possible apprehended, and the affections attached in proportion to the merits thus clearly seen. This is what the apostle desired for the Philippians. (i. 9, 10.) The Jews in the time of Christ felt an attachment to God the Father, but it was founded on ignorance. Many are thus attached to the Christian religion. A man of education, then, is a man whose feelings are guided by real light, not by superstition or fanaticism.

Often feelings are at first of a ravishing kind, which are afterwards, through the operations of light, conscience, and suitable conduct, transmuted into principle, and thus become part of the stable and permanent possession of the soul. Often there are ele-

ments present in the feelings at the first contact of two objects that do not recur in the same form. Some foods are felt to be sweet in the mouth that are afterwards assimilated to the system, and impart strength when their sweetness is gone. The ravishing joy and feasting on the reception by the father of the returning prodigal were by and by transmuted into abiding and working principles. Some of the effervescent elements felt on the marriage day are soon solidified into permanent principles of true love. A man may very highly appreciate the fact that he is not one of the lower animals, yet he is not ravished with the sweetness of the circumstance. But all ravishments of feelings are not transmuted into principles. Some are evanescent, like the joy of the stony-ground hearers, and the light of the foolish virgins. A man of educated feelings is a man whose affections partake to a large extent of principle and permanency.

Some feelings grow from comparatively small beginnings into great and abiding strength. This growth proceeds under the influence of information, conscience, and suitable conduct. If a man takes the word of Christ as the rule of his life, he shall come to the realization of the freedom of the truth, just as one learning to play on a musical instrument at first crouches over the notes slowly, and perhaps painfully, and with no pleasant music heard, yet comes at last to play easily, pleasantly, gracefully, and enjoy the sweetest music from having observed the rules so long. The carnal elements within make the keeping of Christ's word too much of a self-denying effort for some time, but at last the obedient man reaches the true freedom, and hears the music of the divine voice. The keeper of the command will not be left to the mere natural effect of his efforts. He will enjoy the promised manifestation. (John xvi.) It is the Son that makes him free. Whilst he works, the Son works in him, and true assurance is the result. He supplies in his faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, etc., and thus makes his calling and election sure, and an entrance into every step of the kingdom will be richly supplied. (2 Peter i.) This is the real assurance, not the one which comes by efforts to draw, and get one's self shut up in, logical conclusions after the manner of the Brethren. Whilst all this may be thought to relate to the religious affections exclusively, yet it holds true in the social sphere also that a man of educated feelings is spontaneous, free and happy in the exercise of the virtuous affections.

In proportion as the Christian rises to true freedom will he love the moral law. This law will be in his heart, none of his steps shall slide. God's statutes, which guide his feelings, and which solidify them into spontaneously and gracefully operating principles, shall become more and more his song in the house of his pilgrimage. The very law itself shall become a dynamic of the soul, as it came to be in David's case. (Psa. cxix.) When man thus in his love comes to have abiding regard for the authority of the moral law and of the Lawgiver, and realizes spontaneity and cheerfulness in obedience, he has attained full freedom and complete salvation.