

To my brethren in the United Kingdom.

HIGH VIEW, BURFORD, OXON,
September, 1905.

BELoved BRETHREN,

Will you bear with me if I address you at this moment of trial and difficulty to many godly souls in this country. I do not presume in doing so to take any other place than that of a brother among you, probably one of the few who can go back for more than half a century, and who has thus been conversant with the conflicts through which we have passed in consequence of our having been entrusted with the truth of which I will speak further on.

The trial and difficulty to which I refer has arisen in connection with what is called the American trouble. I desire to touch on two points which press on my own spirit. First, I am sure that a local trouble in America would never have been permitted to reach its present proportions over there or here, unless there had been some controversy which He who is "the God of love and peace" has with us. The sense of this has kept me from taking up *the details* and conflicting statements of the two parties (for parties there are) which more or less have occupied the attention of many dear and loved brethren. I believe I acted on a right principle when I asked a well-known brother in America some six months ago, whether "he would help towards such a step as getting both parties in Minneapolis to cease breaking bread, and to approach one another in mutual confession as to wrong feelings and actings with regard to each other, and also to join in mutual confession and humiliation before the Lord." The reply of this brother (R. S. S), though nominally addressed to

me, has been circulated in America and here, but I have not heard that my letter was circulated as well. I added "that had I the strength I would gladly journey all the way to Minneapolis to be present at such a meeting so as to join in their confession and humiliation." I have recently been told of the circumstance of two brothers at variance coming before their brethren, who were to adjudicate upon their differences. Mr. Darby was present and said, "Have these brothers met one another?" The result was that they went into an adjoining room by themselves, and when they came out all was healed between them and Mr. Darby quietly said, "Let us give thanks." How we might have been giving thanks instead of bemoaning what has taken place! *I am persuaded such a thanksgiving is not beyond the reach of grace even now.*

Still it is no use to dwell upon "the might have been," save in confession and humiliation that it is so. I turn now to the second point which presses on me. I have been asking myself, What is the controversy which the Lord has with us? If I may suggest to others what has pressed upon my own soul, it is this, We have not valued, nor have we appreciated as we ought, or *been characterised* by the truth which God in His grace recovered to His church, and which had the effect of separating the early brethren from the world and the systematised religion in which Christians were held. Mr. Stoney's last message to Quemerford brought before his brethren "how little the truth made known to Mr. Darby has been maintained and pursued by us." Suffer me, dear brethren, to enlarge on this.

The first coming of Christ, His sufferings, His atoning death and resurrection, and His call to

sit at the right hand of God can be found in the Old Testament scriptures. His coming in glory and power, that which we call His second coming, is also there. His appearing in glory does not entirely belong to the christian revelation, nor is it the exclusive hope of Christians. It was the hope of the Old Testament saints. It was prefigured when Moses and Aaron (king and priest) went into the tabernacle (Lev. ix. 23), and when they came out (as Christ, Melchisedec king and priest, will come out) the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. In Psalm xc. 16 we read, "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children." Again in Psalm cii. 16, "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory." Isaiah lx. details it most beautifully. The glory of the Lord has risen on Jerusalem, His glory is seen upon her and Gentiles come to her light and kings to the brightness of her rising. The remnant of Israel will look for Him, though they do not know Him as the One who has gone within the veil. He will be seen of them when He comes out. This Hebrews ix. 28 speaks of, though we shall know the spirit of that verse when we see Him, and we can enter now into the saints' acceptance within the veil because the Spirit has come out as the witness *to us*. (x. 15.)

But that which is not in the Old Testament is the revelation of the mystery of which the Apostle Paul only speaks. Peter takes up the two points I have been dwelling upon, both are in the Old Testament scriptures—the sufferings of Christ and the glories which should follow—and tells us that the prophets ministered these things to us. Then he takes up the time between the sufferings and the glory, as a time

of pilgrimage and suffering with a hope in heaven, and sets the saints in their new associations down here as brethren, as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, and also as taking up the privileges of Israel as a kingdom of priests and a peculiar people. But Peter refers those to whom he wrote to Paul, as one to whom it was given to instruct as to this period of long-suffering. (2 Peter iii. 15.)

Bear with me yet while I turn to Paul. He it is (though he is supported by John through his bringing out afterwards by the Spirit all that essentially centres in the person of the Son) who alone speaks of the mystery connected with the present position of Christ in heavenly glory. It had been hid from ages and generations, and the administration of it had been committed to Paul. This mystery has two sides. One, that the saints are one with Christ, the glorified Man in heaven, His body. The other, that while down here Christ is the life of the saints, they live by Him. Collateral truths are connected with this; that the saints are in Christ before God and that Christ is in them before men. The fact of Christ having accomplished redemption, so that the responsibility of man has been fully met, has a far wider bearing than the kingdom blessings which in the age to come will be administered in righteousness in the very sphere of man's responsibility. It was in the counsels of God that Christ should go into the lower parts of the earth, and then ascend up far above all heavens that He might fill all things. It is not merely the earth that is to be filled with the glory of redemption but the heavens also. There is celestial glory as well as terrestrial glory. The glorified Man who accomplished

redemption has gone into heavenly glory, and as the result of that redemption, and in fulfilment of the counsels of God, He has opened the way for the assembly as united to Him to be with Him in heavenly glory also. The rapture, which Paul alone develops as he does the mystery, is the moment of the accomplishment for us of these counsels in Christ. The saints will then actually enter into their place as chosen in Christ before the world's foundation, holy, and without blame, before His God in love, and they will be conformed to His image in the full place of sonship, predestined to it by the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for His own pleasure and delight. This was the special truth made known to Mr. Darby.

Now, dear brethren, this line of things has been dropped out of the recent teaching which has come to light in America, and I may say it is made light of among us. Is there not a reason for our sorrow? How often in years past has the mystery been pressed on us! How often the transforming power of beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face! How often has it been emphasised by the example of Stephen! How often has it been pressed that the truth of the mystery held in power was that alone which could prevent the saints taking a retrograde step towards the world in these last days. It is enough in one sense for me to ask myself, though I put it before my brethren, whether the truth made known to Mr. Darby for the church has characterised my walk privately and ecclesiastically. I seek to tell the Lord about it. But is it any wonder that the enemy should seek to steal it from us when it has so little affected us? We have been rudely awakened to

the enemy's effort. Yet the truth abides and the Holy Spirit is still here to engage our hearts with Christ in the actual solitude, if I may so call it, of His heavenly glory. He will soon have the full joy of presenting us to Himself, that where He is there those who have been given to Him of His Father may be also; but even now the Holy Ghost is here to conduct us to Him in spirit as Eleazer conducted Rebekah to Isaac, so that in that sense He is not alone. This is for *His* present joy, and hence the apostle not only speaks of Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, but desires in opening out the mystery that *we might know the love of Christ*, though it passes knowledge. It is the love that was in Him down here in humiliation so that it might be divinely known by souls; it was manifested in the cross, a love that sought His own on the resurrection morning, a love that has sanctified Himself in heavenly glory for our sakes, a love that will present us to Himself, a love that fills us with the joy of His own heart, the love of His Father and God. It is the same in heavenly glory as when on earth in lowliness and humiliation. "To know the love of the Christ" is spoken of Him as being in that glory.

In confirmation of the speciality of the church's communion and place, I would point out that in Revelation iv., v., where the throne of the Creator, who was, and is, and is to come, is brought before us, and the Lamb's title in redemption to emancipate, and reign with saints over redeemed creation is celebrated, the church is foremost in leading the universal chorus, "Worthy is the Lamb." John, as *prophet*, can record such a vision, for there is nothing *unspeakable* in it,

blessed as it is. Turn now to Paul (2 Cor. xii.) as he unfolds what he entered into as a "*man in Christ.*" Paradise, and the *unspeakable* communications which belonged to it—such a vision it was not possible for him to utter. Things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, belonged to that sphere, yet a "man in Christ," Spirit taught, can understand what is unutterable, and this communion belongs to the church as "in Christ."

My whole anxiety, beloved brethren, and that is the reason I venture to address you, is that you should not lose the ministry of this special and peculiar portion of the saints in the love of Christ, that which no other company than the assembly will ever know. It is this which engages my heart and which I lift up my voice for; and I earnestly beg you to judge and resist every attempt to make light of the recent teaching in America, and to refuse every germ of it by which the truth of a glorified Saviour would be enfeebled in your souls. • Did we behold more earnestly the glory of the Lord our steps would have a more heavenward direction. I would ask you also not to let the rapture of the saints be enfeebled in your souls, connected as it is with the joy of Christ's own heart. It is the hope which specially belongs to the church.

As a good deal is being said about Bethesda principles being advocated, I would add that the separation from Bethesda was upon the ground of their indifference to *evil doctrine* and hence to the *glory of Christ*. The evidence of this was contained in a letter signed by ten leaders in which they said they were not bound to investigate errors taught at another meeting—

those errors being circulated by means of writings among the saints—nor would they reject those who came from under heretical teaching unless they were satisfied that those so coming were unsound. In other words Bethesda would tolerate fellowship with those holding evil doctrine in another meeting, provided they had not, in their judgment, imbibed the evil. That is the ground of my being in the place of separation from Bethesda, J. N. D. and others having in the mercy of God to His people taken it before. To justify this action of Bethesda, Open Brethren (so called) took the ground of assemblies being independent one of another. I may here quote from a letter of F. E. R.'s sent (I believe) to America in 1890. "When any assembly deals with any matter *within its own circle* its decision is binding and every other meeting must accept it; but when it acts for itself in refusing communion with another meeting no other assemblies are bound. For though a meeting may so act in order to protect itself, it cannot pretend to *judge any other meeting* in such a way as that its judgment is binding on all."

I do ask my brethren not to be diverted from the point about which I am well assured the Lord has a controversy with us at this time.

Yours faithfully in the Lord,

THOS. H. REYNOLDS.

Copies can be had by sending an addressed stamped envelope to A. Parsons, Sheep Street, Burford, Oxon.