

TO THE SAINTS OF GOD

MEETING AT RAWSTORNE STREET, ORCHARD
STREET, CAMDEN TOWN, &c.

MY BELOVED BRETHREN,

Extremes are always evil. The mind of man (except when subjected to the guidance and teaching of the Holy Ghost) is ever prone to extremes, taking one part of God's word to the denial of another.

Walking before *one another*, instead of *walking before God*, or, "*in the sight of God*," greatly helps the evil. Walking with God in lowliness of mind, with a conscience exercised before Him in all things, is the only safe path.

We must *all* stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give account to *Him*. Our business with one another, that is, with the whole family of God wherever we find them, is to pray for each other and to love each other, not in word only, but in deed and in truth, "as Christ loved us."

This does not interfere with a wholesome discipline. To purge out the old leaven, to put away a wicked person, is to keep the house clean: for though *free grace* has saved us, and *free grace* keeps us, yet we must ever remember that grace has brought us into a *holy* place; our Father is *holy*, and *holiness* becometh His *house* for ever.

Now it is to certain things in the house, my brethren, that I desire to draw your attention.

Since the late division at Plymouth, my own mind has been deeply exercised as to the avowed principles on which we have met together. It is openly avowed, first, that we meet on 1 Cor. xiv.,* and then Matt. xxiii.

* It has been said to me by some, "we never thought of meeting on 1 Cor. xiv." I reply, "neither did I. The Blood of the Lamb, and the Union of the Saints," by brother Tregelles, was the truth which five years ago brought me out of the Church of England. And I have ministered in the word, not because I trusted to *impulse*, but because I believed, and do still believe it to be the Lord's will that I should. But it is now openly avowed, and printed, that we meet on 1 Cor. xiv; and brethren at Plymouth have been separated from, because they no longer do so. As a proof of this, read the following extract from a letter which was addressed to them previous to the division;—"Many keen sighted Christians in these towns, who have been looking on for years, contrast your conduct of late in this respect with your conduct at the beginning, . . . and are ready to say, . . . When at first we saw these beginnings, they seemed to try honestly to act upon the 12th and 14th chapters of 1 Corinthians in their open meetings; we thought them wrong in their theory, but honest in their attempts to carry the theory they professed into practice. Now, judging by their practice, they have changed their theory in this respect."

It is said distinctly, that "the cause of withdrawal was *not* difference of judgment upon the prophetic question."

I find, therefore, that it is high time, with prayerfulness and watchfulness, to examine the ground I am standing on, separated from all other denominations, and hearing them all pronounced to be wrong.

And now let us, with humbleness, as before the Lord, look for a little at Matt. xxiii. as that portion of Scripture properly comes before 1 Cor. xiv.

Matt. xxiii. 8—10. “Be not called Rabbi”
 “Call no man your father”, &c. . . . “Neither be ye called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ.” . .
 . . . “All ye are brethren.”

It has been said from this Scripture as the word “master” might be translated “teacher,” that the proper position for saints now is to meet as brethren calling no man “teacher.” Now the word is *καθηγητής* and means “a leader,” being derived from *ηγεομαι* to lead.

The simple truth of the Scripture appears to be this : Jesus was personally on earth surrounded with His disciples: He was warning them against the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, (“they say and do not;”) these Scribes and Pharisees were sitting in Moses’ seat, and therefore what they said was to be observed; they loved the uppermost rooms at feasts, chief seats in the synagogues, greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi, that is, Master. The Lord Jesus draws away His disciples from all this to Himself and to the Father. “One is your Master. . . . One is your Father.”

This is the great truth of Christianity; we confess that Jesus Christ is *Lord* to the glory of God the *Father*.

And *all saints* do so. A man who does not own the Lordship of Jesus is no saint at all. “And no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.”

To acknowledge *teachers* in the Church is not contrary to Matt. xxiii. which, instead of opposing Eph. iv. happily harmonizes.

When the Lord Jesus was personally on the earth, He gathered disciples round Himself; at His death the Shepherd was smitten and the sheep scattered; God turned His hand upon the little ones; and “the Lord is risen indeed” was a rallying point, Jesus being “seen of them forty days,” and commanding them not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father. Accordingly, when the day of Pentecost

was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place, and the Holy Ghost came down from Heaven according to the promise.

It would be not only interesting, and surely it is so to the saints, but it would be most profitable to trace the workings of that blessed Spirit as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. I would earnestly commend the subject to your prayerful study, beloved. But I must pass on to Eph. iv. "*When He ascended up on high . . . He gave gifts to men, . . . apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.*" Observe, not when He was on earth with His disciples, but "*when He ascended up on high,*" He gave *gifts*, evangelists, teachers, &c. There were, it appears, five classes in these gifts. The two first, I believe, are passed: we are built upon "*the foundation of the apostles and prophets.*" The others will remain till the Lord takes the Church to Himself. They are "*for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come into the unity of the faith, &c.*"

Saints of God are all baptized by *one* Spirit into *one* body. But though all saints are members of one body, it must not be forgotten that "*all members have not the same office,*" for "*the Spirit divideth to every man severally as he will.*" It is the sovereignty of the Holy Ghost. And where He constitutes a man either an evangelist, pastor, or teacher, that individual is Christ's gift to His Church; and to disown such, is to disown the sovereignty of the Holy Ghost and the gifts of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus I must, without judging a single individual among you, or refusing to hold Christian intercourse with any, object to the use made of Matt. xxiii. as to our *meetings*.

As to the *fact* that we *are* all *brethren*, no Christian that I know denies it. The apostle Peter speaks of the apostle Paul as "*our beloved brother.*" And Paul always writes to the saints as "*brethren,*" wherever they were. Indeed, it had been strange for him not to have done so, for his Lord and Master said of them, "*My brethren.*" But any one may see that this does not at all touch the question of there being in the Church "*evangelists, pastors and teachers.*" If the *Apostle* Paul was "*our brother*" and the *Prophet* John our "*brother*" too, surely evangelists, pastors and teachers are our "*brethren*" also.

Let us now turn to the other portion of Scripture, 1 Cor. xiv. And I beseech you, brethren, "prove" and "try" all that I say by the unerring word of God.

The xiv. of 1 Cor. does not seem to me the ground on which, as saints of God, we should now meet together, simply for this reason,—we have not the gift of tongues, and we have no prophets. (1 Cor. xiii. 8.)

Irving and his followers met on this ground, and evidently perceiving that the chapter was full of instruction to prophets, and those gifted with tongues, the pretension they made was, that the gift of tongues still existed, and that there were prophets. That this chapter is full of direction to these two classes, viz: those gifted with tongues, and prophets, is most clear to any attentive reader.

It would appear, that at Corinth those gifted to speak with tongues, instead of using their gift for the purpose God had intended, (see ver. 22. and Acts ii. 4—11.) made mere display thereof in the Church, and there was no "edification" except some one there could *interpret*. Not so with "the prophets;" they spoke to edification, exhortation and comfort; they were "understood." The prophet in the Church was greater than he who spake with tongues, except the latter could interpret, (see ver. 5.) "edification" being the grand point when the Church met together. Hence the exhortation from ver. 27 to 32. "If any speak with a tongue, &c., let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence." Let the *prophets* speak, two or three, and let the other *judge*. If anything be REVEALED to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all *prophesy*, one by one, that all may learn and all may be comforted: And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in *all Churches of the saints.*" Thus we have an exhortation to the Church of the Thessalonians, "despise not *prophesyings.*" Some at Rome also *prophesied*. See Rom. xii. 6. And in the Church at Antioch there were "*prophets*" as well as "teachers. Acts xiii. 1. Read also Acts ii. 17, 18.

With reference to ver. 34 of 1 Cor. xiv. "Let your *women* keep silence, &c." it must not be forgotten, that there were *prophetesses* as well as *prophets*, (Acts xxi. 9) but "*women*" were not to speak *in the Church*.

Now the word "prophets" (*προφῆται*) all through this chapter, is exactly the same word as where the

prophets of old time are spoken of, Matt. xi. 13; 1 Pet. 1, &c., and means a divinely inspired person.

They were men through whom the *word* of God came. And the very fact that *Scripture is now complete*, is of itself sufficient to prove, that there are no more prophets. John closed the *Revelation*, the last "*prophecy*."

God's order seems clearly to have been, "*first*, apostles; *secondarily*, prophets; *thirdly*, teachers, &c." 1 Cor. xii. 28, or, as we have in Eph. iv. "apostles; prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers."

As we before remarked, we are built upon the foundation of the "*apostles and prophets*;" therefore, "*evangelists, pastors and teachers*," are what we have remaining. Evangelists being those, more especially, who carry forth the glad tidings to poor sinners of free salvation through the blood of Jesus; and pastors and teachers, being those who care for and build up the saints, "*feeding the Church of God*."

There is not a single word in 1 Cor. xiv. as to the way in which evangelists, pastors and teachers are to act; the chapter is full of plain directions about tongues and prophesyings.

It does not, therefore, appear to me correct ground on which, as saints of God, we should now meet together.

I would add one remark more.

If when the Spirit's presence was so *manifest*, this word of exhortation was needed to the prophets and those gifted with tongues, "*Let all things be done decently, and in order*," surely it is a word we ought to heed now.

I firmly believe that the Spirit of God is grieved and dishonoured, as well as the saints saddened, by the frequent pretension to ministry in open meetings; not so by the "*order*" of stated preaching or teaching where He has bestowed gift. Without that a man is no teacher at all.

The epistles⁴ to the seven Churches (Rev. ii., iii.) are exceedingly important here, and worthy of the most prayerful attention. There we find "*seven golden candlesticks*," which represent the seven Churches. In the midst of them the Son of Man is seen, holding in His right hand "*seven stars*," which are "*the angels of the seven Churches*." The word which is translated "*angel*" (*αγγελω*) might be literally translated "*announcer*," for *αγγελω* means '*to announce*.'

A careful reading of the epistles to the seven Churches

will shew that "the angel," or announcer, of each Church, is first addressed as an individual, then the Church itself is addressed, and "to him that overcometh" is the word for individual encouragement.

The fact of there being "Churches" does not at all interfere with the Unity of "*The Church.*" There is but "one body and one spirit." And all believers are baptized by the one Spirit into the one body, of which Christ is the head. The way to manifest this oneness is to "walk in love." John. xiii. 34, 35.

There are two other subjects to which I would desire to direct your prayerful attention.

It seems to me that the following Scriptures are too much disregarded; I do not say completely disregarded, (Hereford and Bristol I *know* to be exceptions,) but certainly too much so.

"*Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.*"

"*Who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?*"

"*The workman is worthy of his meat.*"

"*The labourer is worthy of his reward.*"

I quite admit that the apostle Paul laboured with his hands, and that he would not receive wages from the Corinthians, because of the false apostles, who boasted that they did not; but this does not at all alter the above Scriptures, even if the apostle had never received "wages from other Churches," which he says he did, 2 Cor. xi. 8.

Nevertheless, "it is more blessed to *give* than to *receive.*" And yet the blessed speaker of these words, was Himself ministered unto by "certain women" which followed Him. Luke viii. 3. Meek and lowly Lamb of God! The feeder of thousands ministered to by women, and poor Mary Magdalen among them!

The other matter is concerning *the proper time* on "the first day of the week" for believers to "break bread;" or, in other words, "to eat the Lord's *supper.*"

It would appear from the following Scriptures, that *the evening* is the proper time.

Matt. xxvi. 20, &c. "When the *even* was come, He sat down with the twelve," &c.

Mark. xiv. 17, &c. "And in the *evening* He cometh with the twelve," &c.

Luke xxii. 14, &c. "When the hour was come," &c. "He took also the cup after *supper,*" &c.

John xiii. 2, &c. "And *supper* being ended," &c.

1 Cor. xi. 23, &c. "I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus *the same night* in which He was betrayed, took bread," &c.

And the obedience of the early disciples is thus recorded:—Acts. xx. 7, 8. "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples met together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until *midnight*. *And there were many lights in the upper chamber where they were gathered together.*"

It has been said that the *time* for eating the Lord's Supper is immaterial, and we know that it is very generally eaten in the morning, chiefly, I have been told, for the convenience of those who cannot get out in the evening. I would not wish, by any means, to press this point unduly, any more than I would desire to press "Baptism" unduly; but I have a conscience as to these things, and would desire that brethren in the Lord who see them not would pray about them. For my own part, I am thankful to say I have been baptized; and I purpose, if it please God, to break bread with His people on the *evening* of the first day of the week, according to the Scriptures.

It has been said to me concerning Acts xx., to prove that the time for breaking bread was not material, that as Paul preached till midnight, and was further delayed by what happened to Eutychus, they did not break bread till the next morning.

I fully admit that, but it does not at all alter the *fact* that they *came together to break bread on the evening of the first day of the week*.

One thing is particularly worthy of remark here. How they loved the apostle! And so further down in the chapter, when he is at Miletus about to depart, "they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him." How *they* clung round *the man*! And was there sin in that? The Holy Ghost records it without a word of disapprobation.

Children of God, I would say, love your "pastors and teachers." "Esteem them *very highly* in love, for their work's sake." Be assured, beloved, the blessed Lord is not dishonoured by your loving His servants. On the contrary, hear His own words, "He that receiveth you

receiveth Me, and He that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me.”

And now, in conclusion,

If it be asked me, Do you separate from us? My answer is, I separate myself from none of God's children: Grace has made me a member of the blood-bought family, and I desire to acknowledge myself one with all God's saints. I love to meet with saints to read the Scriptures, and I love to hear *gifted* brethren “preach” or “teach;” and would gladly, according to the ability God has given me, come and exhort the saints, or preach the gospel, at Rawstorne Street, Camden Town, or at any chapel, or at any cottage. But to meet as ‘prophets,’ when we are only poor weak saints, is what I can no longer do; any more than I can see from Scripture, that I am to call no man “teacher.”

I fully admit the force of these exhortations, “exhort one another,” and “admonish one another;” it is our *daily* duty; “exhort one another *daily*, while it is called *to-day*;” but these passages do not warrant *open meetings*, where any one can get up and speak, although I know they have been so used; they plainly teach us that *mutual exhortation* is the *daily* duty of *all saints*.

The question of the apostle might well be asked, “Are *all* teachers?” One might reply, “No;” God says ‘*some*’ not ‘*all*.’ Eph. iv. 11.

May God grant us grace to “walk in love,” “with all meekness, and lowliness, and long-suffering;” and deliver us from a bitter sectarian spirit. May we love “all that in *every place* call upon the name of Jesus Christ *our Lord*, both *theirs* and *ours*.” “There is *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* God and Father of us *all*.”

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God.” “Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth.” May we, then, love one another, “not in word only,” (which is easily done,) “but in *deed* and in *truth*.” And to the dear name of our Jesus be all the praise for ever and ever. Amen.

Your affectionate brother,

W. C. BOARDMAN.