

# A VINDICATION

OF

## THE SEPARATION

FROM THE

PLYMOUTH AND BRISTOL MEETINGS,

WITH AN INTRODUCTION SHOWING THE

# DIVINE INSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH:

ITS RUIN,

AND

THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY THEREIN.

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BY

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LONDON :

W. H. BROOM, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1875.

LONDON :  
DARLING AND SON, MINERVA PRINTING OFFICE,  
35, EASTCHEAP, E.C.

## INTRODUCTION.

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**I**T is with unfeigned thankfulness that one acknowledges the Lord's goodness in deigning to use the first edition of this letter in delivering many of His beloved people from the deceptive connections, and the demoralising systems which it exposes. That none but He could produce such a blessed result is increasingly felt. It is no little mercy to be enabled to direct the saints of God to the light He has so graciously given us in His word, for our preservation from the thick darkness which envelopes all human ecclesiastical structures.

A second edition has been demanded for a long time. In now yielding to the request it is thought desirable to present at the outset a few of the leading truths which distinguish the church of God, and to leave the letter as originally published except in a few verbal alterations, and giving one or two more copious quotations.

Wherever the peculiar calling of the Church is apprehended, and allegiance wrought in the heart to Christ by the Holy Spirit, there will be no difficulty in observing and obeying the divine principles given for the guidance of the saints. But where these are not known and felt, no mere knowledge of wickedness however accurate, will induce saints either to see the evil that pollutes, or to purge out the leaven that contaminates the assembly of God. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we all should be acquainted

with what the Church is according to Scripture, and above all to grow daily in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. The more we know Him, the more we shall perceive what is suitable to His glory and presence in that house *over* which He has been placed as Son of God (Heb. iii. 6).

To learn what the Church is we must derive our information from the New Testament, for there alone is it revealed. Save in type, it is not in the Old. To the Apostle Paul it was given to make known the marvellous grace that unites Jew and Gentile believers to the risen Christ, thus forming "His body," "the church" (Eph. i. 22-23). He tells us in the third chapter of this epistle that this union, or "the mystery of the Christ," was not made known unto the sons of men in other generations, but that it was made known to him "by revelation." In the Jewish dispensation the Gentiles were excluded from the privileges and society of the Jews. "The middle wall of partition" separated them from each other; and "the veil of the temple" shut both out from God. It is evident then that the Church (which is composed of believers from Jews and Gentiles) could not exist whilst the Jewish system lasted. The death of Christ removed all distinction or race by ignoring for ever all that man was. It reduced all classes to one common level by proving them to be alike haters of God in slaying His son. The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is God's provision for the convicted sinner's need, and God's judgment on his human nature. All believers are "crucified with Christ," and thus an end has been made to all that they are in the flesh. The cross has broken down "the partition wall" between Jew and Gentile, slain their enmity, and reconciled both in one body to God. The two are now formed in Christ into one new man, so peace has been made (Eph. ii. 14-17). But further; the moment Christ died, "the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom," and God is no longer concealed from His people. He then with His own hand rent the veil that kept Him apart, and so bears testimony

to the value of the precious blood by which He is fully manifested. His righteous sentence against sin has been fully executed, His holy claims perfectly met, His will thoroughly accomplished in that finished work; and therefore He removes every thing that would keep Him at a distance from His beloved people—God and man can meet together. Every believer in the Lord Jesus has access in peace into the very presence of God. This is the portion common to all who rest in the one sacrifice of Christ that has made them perfect for ever in the sight of God, who has publicly accepted it, and declared His ineffable satisfaction in it, by placing His Son, who voluntarily became the victim, at His own right hand, see Heb. x. 1-19. The MOST HOLY PLACE is now thrown open to Jew and Gentile without distinction, if they but trust in Jesus. Marvellous grace! that meets man in all his hopeless wretchedness, and sets him at ease under the very eye of God, in the consciousness that the value of Christ and His death rests upon him. Well, indeed, may all fleshly differences cease in the light of such blessedness.

We have not to wait for the entrance into the glory for which we are destined in order to enjoy God; we do so now in the measure we apprehend the way He has been revealed in and by the Son. All who have received the Son by faith, stand in the same relationship to God. "The spirit of adoption" is indiscriminately imparted to all, that they may equally enjoy the liberty of sons with God as their Father. All should know the comfort of saying, "Abba, Father." It is His good pleasure to establish this relationship—nothing else would suit His grace nor satisfy His love respecting us, see Eph. i. 5. Hence He could not leave any of His people either under condemnation or bondage, and therefore redeems those who were under the law from it altogether. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13). Again it is written, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the

spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom. viii. 15 ; see also Gal. iv. 4—6).

This twofold application of redemption extends to Gentiles as well as to Jews. Both incurred God’s judgment, and both were in bondage. The one without law and the other through law. The Gentile has in fact placed himself under the same law as the Jew, and is religiously educated in it from childhood in countries where a spurious Christianity is taught. Nothing but grace can bring blessing to any. The grace of God has appeared to all men, bringing with it salvation and liberty. On this ground the Church is founded. “The bond-woman and her son” are cast out of God’s house, and the children of the free are retained in happy fellowship with their Father. Judaism has been superseded by Christianity.

This was not effected during Christ’s life on earth. But when He died, and afterwards ascended to heaven in virtue of accomplished redemption, the condition of God’s people was entirely changed, and also the mode in which God deals with them. The principles which are now introduced, and the favours conferred, are so diametrically opposed to what preceded them in the past dispensation that they could not exist together. It is from the day of Pentecost that Christianity dates ; and as the Church is founded on, and guided by, the truths of Christianity, it follows that her existence began at the same time. The truth that forms the Church, and the principles which govern it, are in such direct variance with God’s requirements from Israel that evidently the Church and Judaism could not co-exist. For instance, how could the confession of the perfect efficacy of the one sacrifice of Christ for putting away sins be maintained with the continuous offering of sacrifices which could only bring sins to remembrance ? And how could God be worshipped in the spirit as Father, and at the same time “tempted” by the unbearable yoke of the law being put on the neck of His worshippers ? It is of the utmost importance to distinguish between these two states if we

want to learn what the Church of God is, and if we desire to be preserved from the wiles of Satan who has sought from its very commencement to lead it back to Judaism. The Church was not established until the Jewish system was abrogated.

Our blessed Lord Himself confirms this fact when He declares to Peter on his confession that He was "the Christ, the Son of the living God," that "on this rock *I will build My Church*" (Matt. xvi. 18). He evidently refers to a time subsequent to that in which He was speaking. We know from Acts ii. 47 that it was after His ascension that "the Lord added to the Church daily those who were saved." In the Acts we find the Lord gathering and building the assembly in accordance with His prediction in Matthew.

The position and privileges of the Church prove that she was not formed till after Christ's resurrection and ascension.

What is her position and what are her privileges? Has God set His Church on the thrones or high places of this world? Has He given her its kingdoms and invested her with its glories? No. Blessed be His name, far higher is the place He has assigned her, far richer the portion He has provided for her, and far brighter the splendour with which He has clothed her. He has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 6). He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. i. 3). He has given us Christ glorified as an object for our hearts, who transforms us to His own image, as we gaze on His glory with unveiled face by the Spirit (2 Cor. iii. 18). And, what is better than all, He has made us conscious of His love which procured all these honours and blessings for us, and secures them to us. It is manifest that it could not be said that we were raised with Christ, and seated in Him in heavenly places, till He Himself was raised, and sat down on high at the right hand of the Father. Neither could we behold His present glory till He received it. The Church then owes her position, bless-

ing, and dignity to the resurrection and ascension of her Head—Christ Jesus—determined for her, it is true, in the eternal purposes of God, but only manifested after the death of the Lord Jesus.

Further, the Holy Ghost dwells in the Church, and thus makes her “an habitation of God” (Eph. ii. 22). But this did not take place till Christ ascended. As He says, “If I go not away the Comforter will not come to you, but if I depart, I will send Him to you” (John xvi. 7). When redemption was accomplished, and Christ glorified in heaven, then the Holy Spirit was sent down to dwell in the redeemed, both individually and collectively. In each believer—as it is written, “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God?” (1 Cor. vi. 19). In the Church—“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Cor. iii. 16.) The context of each of these scriptures shews that it is individual holiness to which reference is made by the former question; and congregational purity by the latter. Both prove that the Spirit’s presence makes a temple on earth for God. They teach the solemn responsibility that flows from such nearness to God. With what jealous care should each Christian keep his body from all that is contrary to the nature of the Holy Spirit! And with what earnestness should all who care for God’s glory in the Church seek to preserve it from any thing that would defile it, and render it unbecoming His temple! “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are,” verse 17. These are the only temples in this world owned of God since the descent of the Holy Spirit. It is one of the peculiarities of the Church that God the Holy Ghost dwells in her.

That the Church was not brought to light until Christ ascended, is further confirmed by the fact that the ministry provided for it was not given till then. It was when Christ resumed His place above that He bestowed and still continues to bestow the gifts neces-



sary for the growth and edification of the Church. Hence we read, "*When He ascended up on high, He gave gifts unto men—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all come into the unity of the faith*" (Eph. iv. 8-13). We learn from this Scripture the love and care of Christ to His Church, that she should be encouraged, supported, warned, and kept in communion with Him, and be for Him down here. And that these gifts shall be continued to her unto the end, "till we all come into the unity of the faith." In Rom. xii. 6-8, we have gifts enumerated, and directions given how to use them, that all intelligent Christians will admit remain to this day, and that they are indispensable to the well-being of the Christian Assembly or Church. From Scripture it is clear that ministry did not find its source in, nor derive its authority from, the Church. The gifts necessary for the performance of it, various as they are, come direct from the glorified Christ; they are all attributed to Him as their giver, and to the Holy Spirit as their dispenser, or "divider as he wills." They are the proofs of God's gracious care for His Church."

Since "gifts" are designed for the welfare of the Church, and as they were not bestowed till Christ ascended, and most of them will be continued until He comes again, it follows that the Church itself did not begin till the same time, and that she will remain on earth till Christ comes for her. Otherwise we would have a Church existing without ministry, which would be quite incompatible with the love which Christ has for His body.

The Church at its origin, as we find it in the New Testament, was externally one united organized body. The Church of God was one as a whole, although in each place where Christians were, there was the local expression of it, still but one in the whole world, —visibly one. To belong to the Church in any place

was, therefore, to belong to it everywhere. Hence letters of commendation were given to brethren going to places where they were not known. There was no such thing as one assembly being independent of another. The will of God in the death of Jesus was "that he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John xi. 52). For this Christ prayed, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (John xvii. 11). Here the object of His solicitude was to keep them in unity, even as the Father and the Son are one. The Holy Spirit is the bond and power of this oneness. He it is who gives the one mind, counsel, and aim to saints. In proportion as we are filled with the Spirit we shall have one common interest, purpose, love, &c., as the Father and Son have. In the 21st verse of this chapter the Lord seeks the oneness of all believers on another ground, viz., on the place which the reception of the truth communicated to them gave them. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." The responsibility of entering into and upholding the relationship which the truth manifested gave to all who believed it, is enjoined on them here. Their oneness as children of the Father was to be so manifest as to induce the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, who produced it. Then the loving heart of Jesus carries his interest for us into the future. "The glory which Thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Here it is not the oneness of purpose and object as in verse 11, nor the oneness of fellowship into which belief of the truth introduced them as in verse 21, but oneness in

the glory which Christ will give us. The millennial world will see us changed into Christ's image, sitting on the same throne as Himself, and then shall know (not merely believe) that Jesus has been sent by the Father, and that we have been loved as He has been. These three characters of oneness belong to the Church. The first two show her present responsible possessions. The last gives her future secured portion, when her oneness shall be perfectly displayed, not by her diligence, but by Christ's faithfulness.

Immediately after the descent of the Holy Ghost we have an example of the oneness of believers. In Acts ii. 44 we read, "All that believed were together." In Eph. iv. 4, it is expressly stated that "there is one body." In 1 Cor. xii. 13, "For by one spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit." In Eph. iv. 3, we are besought to keep this unity (which the spirit produced by baptising us into one body) "in the bond of peace." It is unnecessary to multiply quotations to prove that it is the will of God that His Church should be one, and that it is accountable to present on earth this oneness in which it is set.

Many years ago one pithily defined the Church thus:—"The Church is that body which the Holy Ghost forms into unity, as connected with, and united to, the Lord Jesus Christ, its Head, sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven; and that which the Holy Ghost so unites to Him, is the only thing in Scripture called 'the Church' (*i.e.*, specifically such)."

There are two great powers at work in this world. They are antagonistic in their operations and produce opposite results. They are the Holy Ghost and Satan. The one dwells in and guides the Church; the other dwells in and guides the world. The former prepares a people for Christ, the latter for Antichrist. The Holy Spirit does not make us meet to inherit glory; nothing does this but "the blood of the Lamb." But by the Word of God He enlightens our understandings

to know what is good, and enables us to cleave to it, and discern what is evil and abhor it. He also keeps Christ before our souls in all His perfect love, so that our affections are drawn out to Him, and we long to see Him. Satan, on the other hand, darkens men's minds by keeping them from the truth of God and giving them instead human maxims which make them love and pursue what God calls evil, and hate and avoid what He calls good. The result of the workings of Satan's principles is the formation of a worldly religious structure which, in its finished consolidated state, is designated "Babylon," and fearful is its doom, as recorded in Rev. xviii. The issue of the Holy Ghost's operations is the production of a spiritual building, which in its aggregate form is termed "The New Jerusalem," and happy is its end, as described in Rev. xxi.

But this destiny of the Church leads us to consider its hope. For the acquirement of such knowledge we have to refer again to the writings of the Apostle Paul. As it was to him that the mystery of the Church was first communicated, so it was to him that the special aspect of the Lord's coming for the Church was also revealed. True it is that the Lord Jesus alludes to it Himself in the 14th of John, "I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am ye may be also." But there is no mention of its peculiar accompaniments as related by Paul. We know that the other apostles did not distinguish between it and His coming to give the promised kingdom to Israel. They ask Him after His resurrection, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" So little did they know either of the Church or its hope.

But the Apostle Paul, to cheer the saints at Thessalonica who were sorrowing for their brethren that had fallen asleep, as if there was no hope of glory for them, says: "For this we say unto you by *the word of the Lord*, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (or precede) them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall

descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God ; and the dead in Christ shall rise first ; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air ; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess. iv. 15—18.)

Hence, the proper attitude of the Church is looking for the Lord to come and take her to Himself at any moment. It distinguished the saints at Thessalonica at their conversion, "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." They were not expecting the occurrence of any earthly event before they could see Him whom they loved. Their hope was formed in strict accordance with the Word of God, which promises us that Christ will come for us and bring us to the place prepared for us in the Father's house on high.

The right understanding of the coming of the Lord as revealed in 1 Thess. iv. is the key to interpret many other Scriptures where it is applied to different purposes. For instance, Christ and the Church are invariably represented as being manifested together in glory at the same time before the world. "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 4). By reasoning on this verse we might conclude that we must have been previously taken to Him, otherwise it could not be stated that we shall *appear* with Him. But this is logic, not faith. And reasoning, however accurate, is very different from believing. Faith can turn to the Word of God and affirm on its authority that the Church shall be "caught up to meet the Lord in the air," prior to its public manifestation with Him.

This passage also enables us to understand the force of the entreaty of the Apostle in 2 Thess. ii. 1, where he begs them "by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him," that they be not troubled nor allow themselves to be deceived by any means that "the day of the Lord" had fallen on them because they were in great "tribulations," see

ch. i., He makes use of the truth taught them in his first epistle to correct the erroneous notion they had entertained when he wrote his second. He beseeches them by "the *coming of the Lord*," that they should not imagine they were suffering from the effects of "the *day of the Lord*."\* The first event would secure them from the second. The prophets spoke of "the day of the Lord," in which the wicked shall be judged and cleared out of the kingdom ere it be given to redeemed Israel. This, therefore, is the hope of the believing Jew—an earthly kingdom made ready for him by the sword of the true Joshua. But the Christian's hope is heavenly, and not prepared by any earthly judgments.

The fact of the Church having been taken to heaven as related in 1 Thess. iv., likewise accounts for her being seen there in the Book of Revelation from the 4th to the 19th chapters. Before the judgments commence which are described in the intervening chapters, she will be removed from the scene in which they occur. She was taken up with all the saints in past ages—"the dead in Christ"—to meet and to be for ever with the Lord. They are all now represented by the twenty-four elders who remain in heaven praising and adoring God and the Lamb during the time the providential judgments are poured on the earth. The position of the twenty-four elders shows the Church's, wherever they are beheld throughout the Apocalypse.

The Church is also represented in this book under the symbol of a bride, the Lamb's wife, and her nuptials are celebrated in heaven. Afterwards, the Church is included in the figure of a great army on horses (Rev. xix. 14). The rider of the white horse is followed by the armies of heaven, when he comes out to smite the nations of the earth and its kings, no longer providentially, but personally. The beast and the false prophet are at the same time cast alive into

\* It is well known that the best readings have "Lord," not "Christ," in this verse; and that the word translated "at hand," means "is present."

the lake of fire. That saints are meant by the armies in heaven is proved by their being clothed in fine linen. "The bride" is attired in the same, and it is explained in the 8th verse of this chapter to be "the righteousness of the saints." It was promised to the "overcomers" in the Church at Thyatira that they should participate with Christ in his rule "over the nations" (Rev. ii. 26). And in 1 Cor. vi. 2, it is asked, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" So here when the Lord takes His great power and reigns, He has the saints as His companions in clearing the earth of its corrupters.

But how is it that the Church is in the train of the "King of kings" as the heavens open for Him to come to the earth to execute judgment? The iv. of 1 Thess. enables us to answer the question. She follows *from* heaven because she had been previously *in* heaven. Nothing can be clearer. She has been in heaven during the time of God's providential judgments on the wicked, and during the period of the beast's reign and persecution. She re-appears with Christ when He is manifested in power and glory.

I press this point, because it has been asserted that the Lord will not come for His Church until Antichrist be revealed, and the Jews be gathered to Jerusalem, and some other collateral events fulfilled. If this were so, it would be folly for her now to be expecting her Lord's return at any moment. She should rather learn from the appearance of Antichrist, &c., the almost precise hour when Christ will come, which would be contrary to the constant waiting for the Lord which is inculcated throughout the New Testament.

So far from it being true that the Church will have to wait for the manifestation of Antichrist and endure his persecution before she sees Christ, he will have to wait for her being taken to Christ before he can appear. "The man of sin" shall not be revealed until the Holy Spirit who dwells in the Church be taken away. We have seen that the Spirit will

remain on earth in the Church as long as she continues here; therefore, when He is removed, so will the Church be. When the Holy Ghost leaves the earth, there will be no power here to restrain the working of "the mystery of iniquity," as there is at present. The moment He leaves "then shall that wicked one be revealed" (see 2 Thess. ii. 7, 8); when the Spirit is gone the Church is gone, and then "the Man of sin" appears. "The day of the Lord" will not come until after Antichrist is revealed, but Christ will come for His Church before it.

Hence it is not foolish but intelligent affections which prompt the Church to say, "Even so, come, Lord, Jesus," in response to His last recorded words, "I come quickly." The love of Christ is so deep and real that it will not be satisfied till He *sees* the result of "the travail of his soul." It did not cease towards the Church when He died for her, nor does it now when He lives for her; it will be further proved in His coming for her. Thrice He proclaims in Rev. xxii. that He is "coming quickly." The Spirit and the bride, in unison with His loving heart, say, "Come," and that in reply to His declaring Himself to be "the bright and morning star." The bride discerns in that title that she will not have to wait to see her loving Bridegroom until He rises on the world as "the sun of righteousness." The morning star appears before the sun.

The Church knows that the only thing which defers the realization of her fond hope is the gracious purpose of God in salvation. She cannot tell the moment when the last member of Christ's body may be manifested; but knowing that His coming depends on it, she, "in all spiritual understanding" and affection, in the same breath in which she asks the Lord to "Come," invites the needy sinner to "Come," not to her, but to Jesus, and take the water of life freely. Thus the coming of the Lord is the one earnest and immediate hope of His Church as regarded in the light of Scripture.



We have been considering:—

1st. That the Church is composed of sinners saved by grace—taken from Jews and Gentiles, but by reason of their identification with Christ in death and resurrection, all distinctions between them have ceased.

2nd. That the Church and Judaism could not exist together, and therefore the former only commenced as a system on the earth when the latter was divinely abolished.

3rd. That the Church's calling is heavenly, and her blessings spiritual.

4th. That the Holy Ghost dwells in the Church since the day of Pentecost, and will not leave it as long as she remains on the earth.

5th. That the Church is supplied with gifts for her edification from the ascended Lord Jesus.

6th. That the Church is one body on earth externally as internally one, although having many assemblies locally apart, yet only one Church.

7th. That the Church's hope is the Lord's coming at any moment to take her to Himself for ever, and to change her into His own glorious likeness.

This is a view of the Church as God has constituted her, independent of her maintaining this character. If we look at the Church as she really appears at present, we see she has failed in all these particulars, and indeed in many more. She is "in ruins," as another aptly has said. Not that God has failed in His purpose concerning her, nor Christ in building what He undertook. He will complete that which He has begun, in spite of the opposition of "the gates of hell." But the Church herself has failed as a responsible witness to the truth and ways of God. She has not maintained the place assigned her, nor fulfilled the trust reposed in her. The city set on a hill no longer commands the attention of the beholder. The light set on a candlestick has become obscured.

We need not dwell on the fallen divided state of

the Church, nor adduce proofs of its ruin. Alas! it is too visible in every place. It is acknowledged by most Christians; but the more clearly we perceive its original constitution, the more readily we shall admit and should feel her present condition does not correspond to her pristine state.

National churches are designed for their nations, and therefore conversion to the Lord is not made a pre-requisite to entering them. As a public body, the modern Church is characterized not by heavenly-mindedness, but by worldliness. Earthly possessions are coveted by her, and spiritual blessings neglected. The presence of the Spirit is not recognized. Arrangements are made and services performed as if there were no Holy Ghost in the Church. As to ministry, God's order has been completely subverted. Human ordination has superseded Christ's gifts. Those whom He has qualified are silenced, to make room for those who have been installed in office by their submission to whatever form the sect to which they belong has prescribed. Christian ministry is entirely obliterated wherever human priesthood prevails. The very distinction between "Clergy" and "Laity" is contrary to the genius of Christianity, and is a return to Judaism. The blending of law and grace is what ruined the Church in the first instance, as we learn from Acts xv. and the Epistle to the Galatians.

There is nothing more foreign to the thoughts of God than this attempt to unite Judaism and Christianity—nothing against which He has given more solemn warnings, and denounced with more vehemence. He says, "I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan" (Rev. ii. 9, see also ch. iii. 9). What is offering corporeal sacrifices, performing ritualistic ceremonies, building stately edifices for worship and consecrating them, dressing in priestly robes and assuming official proximity to God, but practically saying—"We are Jews?" Yet these are practised in the professing Church, in consequence of the introduction of

the law and human priesthood into it. There is nothing that has more contributed to the ruin of the Church, and to lead it away from Christ, than the existence, teachings, and doings of the man-made ecclesiastics.

But what are Christians to do who see and confess the ruin? Are they to abandon or lightly esteem their heavenly calling, and plunge into the world because the titular Church has done so? God forbid! They should rather cleave the closer to, and value the more, the fair inheritance God has given them. They should prove by the happy experience of faith that they have been brought to a goodly land to feed in green pastures, where they are so satisfied with their rich portion that they will not yield to the temptation to leave it and seek possessions in a place which is only a wilderness to a redeemed soul, with famine and dissatisfaction pervading it. It is better to have Christ attracting our hearts to where He is at the right hand of God, though we may have but few to accompany us, than to settle down with a crowd of earthly religionists in a world that rejected Him.

Are Christians to perpetuate the disunion of the nominal Church because they see the manifested union of the one body which God established on the earth gone and shattered to fragments? Certainly not. It is as much sin now to promote schism as ever it was. Saints are as responsible to God to obey the injunction, "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," now as the day in which it was written. The question, "Is Christ divided?" still abides in full force. Christ is never divided. There can be no excuse for making sects, nor remaining in them, when God so graciously gives the opportunity of gathering together to the name of Christ. This is not sectarianism; it is its antidote. There is a promise given to those who are drawn together by His name that is not accorded to those who are gathered to some favourite preacher or party. "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Surely we ought to

consider His presence as the greatest favour that could be conferred on us. What better shall we have in heaven? Then, it is true, we shall enjoy it more, because all hindrances will be gone; but it is the same blessed Divine Person which we shall have there that we have now here in His assembly. It is Christ's presence that gives value to a meeting and its services in the sight of God. The answer to prayer is granted on the ground of it by the Father, see Matt. xviii. 19. It is to Christ that the Holy Spirit ever attracts. He is the bond of union for saints and their centre. He sheds joy and gladness on all hearts which surround Him. Why is it, then, that all believers do not avail themselves of this unspeakable privilege? Simply because some other name has taken a deeper hold of their hearts. Where Christ governs the heart and mind it will be found that it is not impossible to shake off all other names and parties and gather to His alone.

All Christians are made "partakers of the Divine nature," which prompts them to unite together in love. In yielding to this desire they should be guided by God's Word when they assemble to express their union; if not, they will form confederations not in accordance with His will. "Evangelical alliances," "believer's meetings," "conferences for the promotion of holiness," and kindred movements of our day, show a laudable intention on the part of those who promote them to have Christian fellowship. They prove that their founders are not entirely satisfied with the disunion of denominational churches. But these alliances are based on a defective arrangement, which involves an unholy compromise of the truth, by excluding God's Word, in all its fulness from their association. An understanding is come to amongst them that no topic shall be introduced that would disturb any party in its sectarian settlement, or offend their religious prejudices. Such unity consists in making platform speeches on selected subjects for a few days, and having some social intercourse with each other, then to return each to his own sect, perhaps made

stronger than ever to maintain its rivalry with the others by reason of their mutual agreement. This looks far more like a counterfeit of the union inculcated in Scripture than a sample of it. It is painfully evident that they do not allow the name of the Lord Jesus alone to *keep* them together.

If we were guided by God's word we should not be left to our own wisdom to steer clear of all the ecclesiastical shoals and quicksands which have made such a mighty wreck of the once fair vessel launched by God. He foresaw all the evil, and has given ample instructions concerning it. He does not repair the mischief by restoring the Church to its primitive order and beauty. But he gives directions how to escape the dangers and pursue the course marked on the chart which He has given to guide us on our voyage through all the perils, till we reach our eternal haven.

The apostle Paul foretells that after his departure "grievous wolves" should enter, not sparing the flock. "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples *after them*" (Acts xx. 29, 30). What is the saint's preservation from these dangerous foes? God and His word. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace." These are the never-failing resources of God's people, at all times and under all circumstances. The love of God for His Church is presented in a very full manner in this chapter, and shines in marked contrast to the rapaciousness of the wolves, and the self-love and pride of the schismatics. He says to the elders, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God which He has purchased with His own blood." We have here in a few words the love of the whole Godhead for the Church. It is God's, and He purchased it at the cost of the death of His own Beloved Son. We have the Son shedding His blood for it; and the Holy Ghost qualifying men to minister to its

need. Thus we may say the interest of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, centres on that Church of whose elders, arising from within, and wolves coming from without, should make havoc of her. We may well say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

When the Church had so fallen that it is represented by the figure of a "great house (in which) there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour" (2 Tim. ii. 20), we have directions given to any one who would be for God amidst such a state of things. "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use." He who is esteemed by God as a vessel of honour and sanctified and fitted for His service, is the man who has purified himself by withdrawing from the vessels of dishonour. In 1 Cor. v. 7, the Church is told to "*purge out* the old *leaven*" from their midst; here the individual saint is told to purge himself *from these* unclean vessels. There is no doubt that this is the force of the passage. Bengel paraphrases it thus:—"By purging himself shall go forth from the number of these dishonoured vessels." He cites Numb. xvi. 26 ("depart from the tents of these wicked men") for a confirmation of his comments on it. Similar directions are given respecting the wicked persons whose ways characterize the "perilous times of the last day." The command is, "from such turn away" (2 Tim. iii. 5).

But while we are thus enjoined to stand aloof from impure persons, we are to ally ourselves "with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart, and follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them" (Ch. ii. 22). These godly dependent ones are to be associated, and unitedly to maintain the ways of God amid the surrounding corruption.

There is no remedy prescribed for improving the "great house," but there are directions given how to be preserved from the powerful influences of evil in it, and to be a witness for God there. The vessels of

gold and silver are not to be sullied by contamination with that which pollutes, but brightened by association with truth, which ever sanctifies.

In this Epistle, as in Acts xx., God and His word are presented to us, in all their perfectness, for our support and guidance. We are reminded in Ch. i. 9, 10, that our salvation and our calling are according to the purpose of God, which He counselled before the world began. That the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and the work He accomplished in death and resurrection, made manifest this purpose. Then we are told in the 14th verse, that "the Holy Ghost dwells in us." Thus again we have the whole Godhead engaged on our behalf.

Next we have the Scriptures traced to their divine source, and their all-sufficiency for "the man of God" stated, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work." Timothy is encouraged to "continue in the things which he had learned," not only because he knew from whom he learned them, but also "that from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures." The doctrines given for faith do not emanate from the Church as their author, but from God Himself. The Church cannot make doctrines; it is its bounden duty to receive all from God, to learn and obey. The Scriptures alone are the authority for every right word and work. It is remarkable that it is in this Epistle which gives so fully the departure of the Church from its first estate as "the pillar and ground of the truth," that the origin of the Scriptures is given. God would thus have us to value His Word increasingly as the days become darker, and know indeed that it is "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path."

To the Apostle John was assigned the happy service of preserving "the doctrine of Christ" for the saints against the encroachments of all who would assail it. From his peremptory style we may learn

how zealously he defended the holy charge committed to him. He designates them, — “Antichrists, who deny the Father and the Son,” and will not allow any who infringe on the sacred name of the Son to have the Father. “Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father.” On the other hand, he puts all who have divine life into “fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ,” and tells them they may know that God abides in them, “by the Spirit which he hath given them.” He commends the “young men,” because the word of God abode in them; and he lets all his beloved children know that “he that keeps His (God’s) commandments, dwells in Him, and He in him.” Thus John, like Paul, commits us to God, and to “the word of His grace,” for joy, strength, and protection, in the danger of “the last time.”

The second epistle of John is addressed to an elect lady and her children, and is written for the same intent as the first, namely, to guard “the doctrine of Christ.” Before telling the lady to close the door against any who did not bring this doctrine, he morally prepares her to do it in a manner worthy of God. She is encouraged to walk in truth and love, not only by “the commandment of the Father,” but by the example of “Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.” The Son perfectly manifested the Father, He fully showed all that God is, “in truth and love.” The apostle, in his measure, reflects these divine qualities, for the love which he had to this lady and her children was characterized by “the truth.” He does not say whom I truly love, but “whom I love in truth.” It was the truth which formed his love, and gave it its character. This is confirmed by his uniting with himself in this affection “all who had known the truth.” It commanded their hearts. Seeing any walking in truth, made the apostle to rejoice greatly, as here with some of this lady’s children. He says, in the next epistle, that he had “no greater joy than to hear that his children walk in



truth." Truth was so precious to him that he loved all who maintained it practically, *i.e.*, walked in it. It is very essential to note this now-a-days, when many make a profession of loving the brethren an excuse for evading the claims of truth. God's Word, we see, meets every snare of the enemy. When our hearts are governed by the truth we shall love and esteem all who walk in it, and we shall be careful to avoid any who would deprive us of it.

This is the condition of soul the Spirit of God in John inculcates in the elect lady. He would have her to walk in truth and love, and then she would be morally capacitated to refuse the "deceivers" who confessed not the true Christ. Any one who did not do so was "a deceiver and an Antichrist." She was thus warned against them, and instructed further concerning them by being told that "whosoever transgresses and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, has not God." Whilst, on the contrary, "He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son."

These false teachers then would deprive her of God if she hearkened to them detracting Christ, and her soul, filled with truth and love, jealous of His glory, would rise up and repel them with holy and godly indignation. This is the only way Scripture directs us to treat them. She was not to "receive them into her house, neither bid them God speed." It is not human strength or energy that is wanted in testimony for God, it is spiritual power, exercised in dependence and obedience. This lady has to perform the same duty as the Apostle himself would have in like circumstances.

Some have said that the lady is not forbidden to receive the corrupt teacher into the Church, therefore *we* have no warrant to exclude him from it. It is only from our own houses we are to keep him. If there be any weight in this argument, it consists only in an attempt to prove that our own houses are more sacred than God's. A notion too absurd, if not too profane, for any christian to entertain.

It is worse to say that we have no directions given as to how the lady is to be treated if she disobeyed the Apostle's injunction, for it is contradicting the very scripture addressed to her. She is told "that he who biddeth him God speed (or salutes him) partakes in his wicked deeds." In prescribing for us the manner in which we are to deal with the profane teacher, God is telling how to act towards any one who may become his partner. The treatment for one is the same as for the other. In the sight of God the heretical teacher and his saluter become identified, (according to this scripture) and will also be in our's, if we are walking in truth and love.

Thus the Apostle John, writing in view of the character of "the last time," presents the privileges and the responsibilities of the children of God as abiding the same at the end as at the beginning. Fellowship with the Father and the Son is maintained by the Spirit, and no communion of any kind is allowed with any who bring not "the doctrine of Christ." As Abraham of old hushed off the unclean fowls that would pollute the sacrifices which betokened his title to the possession of the promised inheritance, so here at the close, this elect lady was to drive away any unholy invader on the person of Christ, who as the eternal Son revealed the Father, for her everlasting joy. Surely these things are written for our examples, surrounded as we are with the evils foreshadowed in the times of St. John.

We find the same blessed resources, and similar directions given for our faith and guidance, in the epistle of Jude, where the apostasy of Christendom is delineated from its introduction to its destruction. "Ungodly men crept in unawares" among the saints. "They turned the grace of God into licentiousness." That very grace of God that not only "brings salvation," but teaches its recipients to "live soberly, righteously, and godly," they perverted by alleging that it sanctioned the indulgence of sin. As a consequence, they denied the Lord to be their Master to

govern them. They "despised dominion" of every kind, and reviled dignities. Whilst they sought to pull down all above them, they would put themselves above all. This is the force of the expression in the 19th verse. "These be they who separate themselves." They did not leave the professing Church, but they set "themselves apart" in it. They occupied a place which distinguished them from others. Then it is added, they were "sensual, having not the Spirit." The word rendered "sensual" here is the same as that translated "natural" in 1 Cor. ii. 14, and elsewhere. They were never really born of God.

They are represented by three remarkable men of ancient days. Cain, Balaam, and Korah, are the persons selected by the Spirit of God to illustrate their characters. We have only to open our eyes to see a reproduction of the doings of these three individuals in the leaders of Christendom. Those go in "the way of Cain" who reject the testimony of God, and follow their own will in religion, relying for their acceptance on what God has pronounced a solemn curse. How many there are calling themselves Christians who put their trust in man in some way or other, forgetting the denunciation, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm" (Jer. xvii. 5). And how many who bear the same name trust to their fancied keeping of the law to commend themselves to God, notwithstanding His declaration, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse" (Gal. iii. 10). They continue their similarity to Cain by showing their enmity to those whose sole confidence, like Abel, is in the blood of the Lamb.

Balaam has his disciples in those who make use of their religious offices to acquire "reward." Alas! it is no uncommon sin now to run "greedily after the error of Balaam;" for "entering the ministry" is made synonymous with "obtaining a living."

Korah has his successors in those who usurp the place of Christ as Head and Priest of the Church, and rebel against the authority of those whom He has constituted

kings and priests. Christ has not only washed all who believe in Him "from their sins in His own blood, but has made them kings and priests unto God and His Father" (Rev. i. 6; see also 1 Peter ii. 3—9). "Woe unto them" who gainsay it!

These apostates, having cast off the authority of God, walk according to their own desires, and become thoroughly "ungodly," for which the Lord comes personally with "His saints" to execute judgment on them.

But the blessed God has not only given us this perfect description of the apostasy and judgment of Christendom for our warning; He also shows the saints His provision for their preservation from the prevalent ungodliness and their place in reference to it.

The Epistle is addressed to "the called ones," which in itself is full of comfort, for it reminds us of the unchangeable purpose of God to give us glory. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." "And whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Here again we have Father, Son, and Holy Ghost each taking His divine part in encouraging, preserving, and sustaining us, until we reach the end, and appear in glory with the Lord. We are "sanctified in God the Father." (Some read "beloved" here, instead of sanctified; in either case it shows the Father's care of us.) We are "preserved in Jesus Christ." Who can tell from how much evil he is kept by Christ? We are to show our sense of dependence on God by "praying in the Holy Ghost," who also gives intelligence to our petitions "because he maketh intercession for the saints according to God." Thus we have Father, Son, and Holy Spirit engaged on our behalf, and we are sent forth in the strength of such knowledge to "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." We are not to sail down the stream with those who depart from or assail "the faith," but we are to uphold it in all its purity, in spite of every opposer. It is not said "the faith given *through* the saints," leaving us dependent

on the uncertainty of tradition to ascertain what we are to believe and maintain, but “to the saints,” leading us to its source as it came from God, that we may have it indubitably, and in purity. We are not to suffer ourselves to be drawn into the vortex of apostasy by adopting “articles of faith” decreed by the false church to keep pace with her pretensions and to forward her “ungodly” designs, but we are to contend for the one unchangeable “faith, *once* delivered.” Faith, like its object, remains unaltered at all times—“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” The Church cannot make creeds, but should believe what God has revealed, and invent nothing.

We are then referred to the Word of God to remember instances of God’s judgment on those who believed not and on those who did not keep their first estate; and to Enoch’s prophecy to know that the like inevitable punishment awaits ungodly Christendom. But the same Scripture assures us that instead of having to await this judgment, we shall take part with the Lord in executing it. “Behold the Lord cometh *with* ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all,” &c. Here again we are indebted to 1 Thess. iv. for the knowledge that we have been caught up to meet the Lord previous to the commencement of the judgment. The Church is included in the “holy myriads” who accompany the Lord on this solemn occasion. Moreover, we learn that such was God’s purpose always about us, for as far back as Enoch’s time He made it known, and gave an example of it in the translation of the prophet himself prior to the destruction of the wicked by the flood. The removal of Enoch and the judgment that ensued are in remarkable harmony with the events of his prediction, which is only given in Jude, when the ungodliness of Christendom has come to its height. May we, O Lord, whilst waiting for our translation, be kept like him walking with Thee. The word of God thus comforts and enlightens us in the most sorrowful and darkest days of the apostasy.

Although this Epistle does not regard Christians forming a church separated from mere professors who corrupted it, yet it contemplates their being assembled together in a place where they can, through grace, "build themselves up in their most holy faith," and pray. They are exhorted to keep themselves in the love of God, and look for the coming of the Lord Jesus. Thus we are to be strengthening each other's soul in the principles of our most holy faith, and maintain communion with God in the consciousness of His love abiding on us now as perfectly as ever it will. We imbibe somewhat of God's own gracious feelings and holy tastes as we enjoy fellowship with Him, and become spiritually capacitated to distinguish between "clean and unclean." Accordingly we are told, "of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." By holding fast the truth which God has given us, we not only save ourselves from the pollutions which encircle us in every part of Christendom, but also any of our brethren who may be entangled in them, if they have ears to hear and hearts to value the same truth (see 1 Tim. iv. 16). Whilst walking with God makes us compassionate and tender, and willing to make all due allowances, it at the same time will not permit us to tolerate evil, nor make terms of concord with what defiles. It will make us (like God Himself) haters of sin. We are to be found "*hating* even the garment spotted by the flesh." We are to stand aloof from the corrupters of Christianity, and to nourish the three graces, faith, hope, and charity, in ourselves, and thus be in a *position* and a *condition* that we can put forth a helping hand to pull others out of the fire where they may have been allured. We help others in proportion as our own state is right in the sight of God.

It is easy to perceive that God has preserved a few Christians to this day who submit to His will in separating from the systems of corrupt Christendom, and gather together around the Lord Jesus to worship God

in the Spirit, to hear His word, and "to wait for His Son from heaven."

About the year 1830 a few Christians in Ireland were awakened to the fact that the Church had sadly departed from her state as originally constituted by God. They looked around and beheld nothing but sectarianism on every side under varied guises and professions. To avoid this evil they abandoned whatever false position they hitherto occupied as being members of particular churches or denominations, and met together first in Dublin simply as being members of Christ. They received into fellowship all who gave evidence of being also Christ's, they required no other terms of communion. At the same time they exercised discipline on any who either in walk or doctrine brought dishonour on the name of the Lord. They distinctly disavowed the claim of being the Church of God, alleging that such an assumption would be tantamount to disowning any to be Christians but themselves, whereas they willingly recognized saints in almost every denomination. They repudiated the notion that they had any authority to appoint officials to minister among them. They learned from Scripture that in the apostles' times the Church did not ordain its own elders or bishops, but that it required apostolic authority to do so, which neither they nor any others possessed at present. They did not, therefore, attempt to exercise a power which they had not. But they thankfully owned whatever gift Christ gave for the edification of His body, or the conversion of sinners, by allowing liberty for the exercise of such ministry in the Spirit in every possible way.

About the same time, the Lord in a most remarkable manner raised up some other Christians, in different countries, unknown to each other, with similar minds. After a little time it became known, and they all gladly acknowledged each other as Brethren in the Lord, and encouraged one another by mutual intercourse. Saints were admitted to have communion with them in commemorating the Lord's death, from varied denomina-

tions, without requiring them to renounce their own party or adopt any particular creed. All that was looked for was the true confession of Christ, for He was the bond of their union ; but this of necessity implied consistency with such a profession ; and where it did not exist, admission was refused.

For some years these Brethren walked in much love and humility, and enjoyed happy Christian fellowship together. There were small assemblies of them in Ireland, England, and Scotland. From thence they rapidly reached the Continent, and eventually spread to America and Australia. Though thus extended, and having several gatherings, they did not regard themselves as forming so many independent churches, but as gathered on the ground of, and hence an expression, however feeble, of the unity of the one body, into which they were called by the grace of God. Accordingly, they maintained intercommunion in the fullest way, yet recognising no bond that they had not in common with all who were Christ's. God greatly blessed them, and used them largely in unfolding Scripture, especially in enabling them to bring out with distinctness the difference between Judaism and Christianity.

But, alas ! after a while it was discovered that there were elements at work within themselves which were insidiously undermining all their testimony. A party was formed among them whose object was to endeavour to nullify the truths promulgated by the others, and raise a counter testimony to them. The operation of this party stealthily progressed till it culminated in false doctrine respecting the Lord Jesus Christ. Then it became a question how this erroneous doctrine was to be judged by those who, from jealousy to the Lord's glory, could not identify themselves with it. The manner of treating its propagators became the test in all the assemblies of these brethren of not only knowing those who were on God's side in upholding the honour of His holy and beloved Son, but also of maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the Church.



In the year 1847 confessions were printed by some at Plymouth who had been betrayed into participation in the false doctrine, in which they declared their renunciation of it as deadly error. Others defended it, and went to the Bristol meeting, where they circulated it. Some time previously, Mr. Harris, of Plymouth, had been handed a comment on the 6th Psalm in MS., which he considered contained such blasphemous allusions to our blessed Lord that he was bound to publish it, with his own review of it, in order to warn saints of its pernicious tendency. It was this publication that first brought to light the secret cause of the opposition to Brethren who were testifying to the truth, and it revealed the startling fact that a most revolting doctrine had been clandestinely taught at Plymouth.

By these means the false doctrine became generally known among the assemblies of the Brethren, and it became incumbent on them to judge it by refusing fellowship with any who had imbibed it. To this duty, so plainly enjoined in God's word, the meeting at Bethesda, in Bristol, declined to observe. They refused to examine the doctrine, and declared that what took place at Plymouth did not concern them. They were remonstrated with, and told they had persons in their own meeting who held the doctrine, and were disseminating it in tracts amongst them. Still they would not comply. Mr. Darby wrote a letter to the Brethren apprizing them of the relationship of Bethesda to the false doctrine, in which he warned them of the danger of having communion with her as long as she continued in connection with the holders of the heresy.

It now became lamentably manifest that in most meetings of the Brethren there were many who had never understood either their position or their principles; for while they strongly repudiated the erroneous doctrine, they avowed that they would not discontinue fellowship with the Bethesda meeting. At the meeting in Brunswick-street, Dublin, it was agreed to

examine any who might come to them from Bethesda, whether they were sound in the faith, and, if so, they would receive them. They thus proved that they did not know the ground of the Church of God, which they professed to have taken when they withdrew from the systems of men, and that they did not own the one Spirit in the whole Church. Some of them publicly asserted that they had nothing to do with proceedings of the meetings in England, and that the question which was shaking all their gatherings should not have been introduced into Dublin. It is clear if they had acted on the knowledge that the Church of God is one body and indwelt by the same Spirit, they would have owned the excommunication of the persons at Plymouth as fully as if it had occurred in their own assembly in Brunswick-street. And when the Bethesda meeting disobeyed the divine command by allowing false teachers amongst them, and by publishing a letter in which they avow that they will permit Christians to come to them from even "*heretical teachers*," if the Brunswick-street leaders believed it was the Holy Spirit enabled saints elsewhere to attend to His inspired word and close the door against such, they could not believe it was the same Spirit that induced the Bethesda people to open the door for them. By abandoning the scriptural directions concerning the judgment of evil, the Brunswick-street Brethren have left themselves exposed to the effects of whatever baneful doctrine the erratic saints, whom they admit to their meeting may have come from. They were reminded that receiving Christians, irrespective of whence they came, or whither they went, might connect them with Socinianism if such persons had communion with any who held it. That if they permitted them to go to and fro between their meetings, they would be proclaiming that they and Socinians were one, although the persons who so united them were Christians. But all such arguments and entreaties were of no avail.

From the years 1848 to 1850 the subject was kept

more or less before the minds of Brethren in Brunswick Street. One dear brother instructed them in a course of lectures on the principles which God has given for the government of His house. He also wrote letters to some of them, and besought them to take a right action towards the propagators of the "horrible heresy" (as one of themselves called it). Although this beloved brother was greatly esteemed by all who knew him for his loving and gracious manner, and had immense influence from the eminent gift he had in unfolding the Scriptures and edifying saints, yet he could not prevail with the leaders there to alter their purpose. They rigidly adhered to their first decision to continue in communion with Bethesda. This avowal drove out many from their meeting, who were anxious to maintain the glory of the Lord Jesus in all His relations to God and man, and preserve the ground of church fellowship which Brethren originally occupied.

Some time after the separation Mr. Darby visited Dublin. Before he allied himself to the seceding Brethren he went to Brunswick Street, and asked permission to address the congregation on the subject which had caused the division. His request was refused; but he was allowed to speak on it to some whom they invited to meet him in the school-room. He told them of the sad occurrence in Plymouth and the part Bethesda took in reference thereto, of which he was an eye-witness. But all in vain; they remained as unmoved by his statements as they did by the efforts made to reach them during the two years the matter had been pressed on them. They continue in fellowship with Bethesda to this day, and consequently are identified with the doctrine which emanated from Plymouth, and which they designated "horrible heresy." Such inconsistency can only be accounted for by their non-apprehension of the unity of the Church, and their practical denial of God the Holy Ghost dwelling in it.

If my Christian reader understands what the Church of God is according to Scripture, he will have no difficulty in perceiving the confusion and disorder which must have ensued among a body of people

ostensibly taking that ground when a moment of trial arrived, and the question of applying its principles and enforcing its precepts proved that many of them did not understand the one nor regard the other. They showed by their words that they did not comprehend the truths which form the Church of God, and by their acts that they did not perform the duties which divinely devolve on it. Instead of working in unison with those who did and were enabled by grace to do what the exigency of the occasion demanded, they set themselves to counteract their proceedings. The discipline of the former was not recognized by the latter. United testimony against evil could no longer be borne. Leaven was introduced. Concord was ended.

Satan invariably tries to hinder God's people of seeing and enjoying the blessings prepared for them. He did so with Israel when he induced them not to enter the promised land which "flowed with milk and honey." He does so with Christians when he prevents them seeing their portion and position in the risen Christ. He endeavours to hide from them their oneness with Christ as members of His body, and by every means in his power seeks to obstruct the manifestation of the unity of this body on the earth. Alas! he has succeeded too well. How few are the Christians who understand and consciously possess their own peculiar blessings in Christ in the heavenlies, and exhibit their oneness in church fellowship to the world! But any who, by the grace of God and teaching of His Spirit, have apprehended their proper calling, and act in accordance with it, find it most blessed and holy. Thank God, we have to do with one who is stronger than Satan, and does not forsake us in times of difficulty and ruin; but gives us the unspeakable joy of His presence, and the guidance and consolation of His word until He takes us to spend eternity with Himself. Unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

# A VINDICATION.

ETC., ETC.

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MY DEAR BROTHER,

I am sorry to find, on the perusal of your circular of 17th last January, so little in it that is befitting its avowed object of calling on Christians for united prayer and humiliation. In vain I look for any acknowledgment in it of the sin which *necessitated* the separation. It is merely continuing a system that has been extensively adopted by an adverse party, of indirectly attacking an eminent servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I regret that, when you undertook to narrate the cause of those doleful effects which you so graphically describe, you did not mention what the "question of discipline and order" was to which you trace their production. Whatever it was, you regard it as mere "controversy;" for you tell us, that "one who had been theretofore eminently gifted, &c., made a division, separating those who took his side in that *controversy*, and commenced to hold a new meeting." You then say, without an attempt at proof, "such a course was wholly unwarranted by the Word of God, for then

neither in doctrine or practice was any evil discovered." This is really going too fast. You found your very grave conclusion against this "eminently gifted" person on a premise that is utterly disproved by the history of the Plymouth meeting at that period. I trust to show, from the most incontrovertible sources, that teachings contrary to the leading truths of the Epistles were "then discovered;" and that ungodly means were taken to prevent the introduction of these truths among the saints there, and to circulate counter notions. This I call manifested evil in doctrine and practice, which you carefully abstain from noticing.

By not relating the character of the meeting from which this brother separated, you leave a most erroneous impression on the minds of your readers concerning him, and deprive them of the means of ascertaining whether you are justified in your rapid assertions. If amidst the wildest confusion, sectarianism, and clericalism, he sought to establish God's order and truth, and the owning of the presence of the Spirit of God in the assembly, and retired only when his efforts were rejected, you ought to be able to look at it in a very different light from a question of controversy, and be so subject to God's revealed mind, that instead of announcing yourself as an "author of a remonstrance to the separating brother," you should have so identified yourself with his action as to become a thanksgiver to God for enabling His servant faithfully to rebuke the evil that existed there, and preserve the glorious truths which were there assailed.

Let me enumerate these truths before giving examples.

of the teachings that were current at Ebrington Street, Plymouth, before the separation, and the means adopted to support them ; we shall then be better prepared to estimate *its* guilt in opposing them. They are :—

1st. The heavenly calling of the Church as revealed in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

2nd. Its union with the risen Christ—His Body.

3rd. The presence of the Holy Ghost dwelling in the Church, and all-sufficient to guide and minister in the assemblies of the saints.

4th. The immediate hope of the Lord's coming for His own.

The maintenance of these truths, as well as the receiving into fellowship all who were members of Christ, as such, unless they were guilty of impure doctrine or practice, was what distinguished "Brethren" from all the sects. They are the prominent doctrines of St. Paul's writings. They, and the spirit of adoption, characterise Christianity. "The mystery of iniquity" soon appeared to counteract them, and gradually succeeded until it swept away every vestige of them. The result is all the varied phases of evil that pervade Christendom, and which prepare it for the reception of Antichrist, which brings down God's judgment upon it. The brother whom you so summarily condemn was one of the honoured instruments in God's hand of reviving and presenting them in these last days to the saints for their acceptance by faith.

And here I cannot avoid remarking how near each of these truths brings God Himself before the soul. It is impossible to dwell on any one of them without

feeling His blessed presence. On the other hand, neglect them and you get away from God.

Let go the first—we become worldly, and plunge into the place where Christ is not.

Let go the second—we become sectarians, thinking more of our own independent denomination than we do of the “one Body,” and, consequently, lose sight of “the Head.”

Let go the third—we give room to clericalism, which always comes between the soul and God.

Let go the fourth—we allow other prospects to intervene and form our expectations, instead of the bright hope of looking every moment for our blessed Lord’s return to take us to spend an eternity with Himself.

Who is it that values communion with God, in ever so small a measure, that will consent to lose truths which bind the heart and soul so intimately to Him?

I would much rather pursue this line of thought than descend into the gloomy path of man’s opposition to these Divine doctrines. But you have compelled me by the manner in which you have opened the whole question. I feel it a duty to try and prevent any of God’s beloved children, who may not be acquainted with the occurrences, being misled by your assertions.

To give an example of the peculiar manner in which Mr. Newton (the leader of the meeting at Ebrington Street, Plymouth) laboured to obliterate all traces of the Apostle Paul’s teaching on the heavenly calling of the Church, I need only refer to his “Thoughts on the Apocalypse,” published in 1844, that is, nearly two



years before the separation. In pp. 22 and 23 of that work, he says:—

“The Church at Jerusalem, like a sun in the centre of its system, had other Churches like so many planets revolving round it. It was strictly a Mother Church.” “This, then, was a relation that could not be fitly symbolized by two candlesticks unconnected, equal and alike. One candlestick, with many branches and many lamps, would have been a more appropriate emblem; and this is the character of the symbol employed to represent Jerusalem when she shall nationally assume her metropolitan position in the millennial earth.” “But when Jerusalem had rejected the testimony of the Church, St. Paul was raised up to carry the truth among the Gentiles. He preached the *same* Gospel; but he established a *new order* among the Churches which he gathered. This order was not metropolitan. Seven Gentile Churches are represented by *seven* candlesticks of gold, separate one from another, all equal, all alike—connected by no *visible* bond, neither revolving round any common centre. They were independent one of another.” “In faith, doctrine, and manners they were emphatically *one*. The whole of the Gentile Churches, though locally separate, together constituted *the one Church* of the living God.”

I ask any one who understands the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, do these statements give the most remote idea of what the Church is, as represented in these Scriptures? or of what is taught there by Paul as “minister of the Church?”

The Church, as “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places,” is the direct contrast to restored Israel, blessed with all earthly blessings in the millennial world; therefore, the symbol that would exhibit the one would be most unsuitable to the other. But by blending them in this ingenious way, he imperceptibly leads his readers to think that the Church at Jerusalem possessed nothing better than what the millennial Jerusalem will. “Its order was metropolitan.” “It was

strictly a Mother Church." What Scripture says so? We are not to be deceived by his use of the word "heavenly;" for it is manifest that his whole chain of reasoning in the opening chapters of this book, is to make the Church earthly, existing before the ascension of Christ. For instance, describing the Church in a note, p. 22, he says—"Their laws were heavenly, for they were those of the sermon on the mount!"

In the same way we are not to be misled by what he says of St. Paul. He preached the *same* (the italics are his own) Gospel, but he established a new order," &c., is artfully introduced to deny that the mystery of the Church was first revealed to this Apostle, and that he ministered any truth beyond what the Apostles did on the day of Pentecost. He merely established a new order, and formed "independent Churches!" In refutation of such teaching, see Eph. iii. 7, and Col. i. 25. Another instance of Mr. N. blending the heavenly and earthly families we have in his comments on Rev. iv. 3. "The jasper and sardine stone" in this verse express the appearance of Him who "sat on the throne." He makes them synonymous to the twelve that were on the breastplate of "the high priest of Israel"—"fitting glory of the family of God"—"accomplished in no little measure, when *the Church* of the firstborn, as the *risen priests of Israel*, shall inherit that heavenly city; and when of Jerusalem it shall be said," &c. "Union with the person of the Son of God is the great characteristic blessing of the whole family of the redeemed, whether in *earth* or *heaven*," pp. 40, 41.

I do not stop to examine whether these statements

are correct—I believe them to be most erroneous ; but adduce them to show with what refined subtlety he lowers the heavenly calling of the Church.

In contradistinction to the Church being united to the risen Christ, Mr. N. teaches, in p. 21, that when the Lord Jesus was personally on earth, the materials of the Church were gathered by his word, were quickened with Divine and heavenly life, and were brought into living and everlasting union with Him, who was “the new thing in the earth.” This helps us to understand what he affirms in page 41, namely—“Union with the person of the Son of God,” which is not taught anywhere in Scripture. These remarks show how his teachings on the unity that subsists between Christ and the Church obscure the bright revelation which we get in the Epistles on the union of the Head and Body. They also efface the significance of that most significant prohibition of our Lord to Mary—“Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father.” (John xx. 17.) Jesus would have her to learn that His cross had completely severed all earthly connection between them, and that the alliance must now be founded in, and commence from, His ascension. (2 Cor. v. 16.)

It is true Mr. N. uses the term “body,” but in a most deceptive manner, conveying the idea that it means a company of people. “But the Church being a body chosen out of the nations,” p. 14 ; then, after saying *it* is a kingdom under the immediate government of Christ, he adds—“We might expect, therefore, that in such a book as the Revelation, . . . this, His excellent relation to such a *body*, would be distinctly marked. Accord-

ingly, the very first chapter reveals Christ in His relation to the *churches*," (p. 15.) The most superficial reader cannot fail to observe how quietly he glides the word "body" into "churches," and then teaches that Christ's dealings with the seven Churches of Asia are expressive of His excellent relation to His Body the Church, thus ignoring all sense of the instruction that St. Paul gives of "the Body."

Instead of recognizing the "one Spirit" dwelling in the Church, and owning His manifestation in the free exercise of gifts, there was a party formed in Plymouth long before the separation for the express purpose of bearing united testimony against brethren who taught doctrines different from Mr. Newton's, and to prevent them ministering there. This party substituted their own authority as teachers, for the Spirit's maintenance of order, founding their rights on 1 Cor. xiv. 29—"Let the others judge." "This was said to the prophets, to which the teachers now answered. They were to try, and approve or not, of a person being a teacher." Mr. N. expounded this notion in Somersetshire, and so thoroughly indoctrinated the meeting there with his views, that they denounced anyone's taking a part in the meeting as led of the Spirit as "impulse"—"that the Holy Ghost wrought in the body by members, and that these members were the gifted teachers." ("Narrative of Facts," p. 33.) "It has been formally and expressly denied that the presence of the Holy Ghost should be looked for in the assembly." (*Idem*, p. 23.)

When a meeting of fifteen brethren was convened to inquire into the complaints of Mr. Young, Mr. Pridham,

Mr. Darby, and others, against Mr. Newton's sectarianism and clericalism, he "broke out in great anger; saying, that he waived all formal objections, that he did seek to make a focus of Plymouth, and that his object was to have union in testimony there, against the other brethren, (*i.e.* as explained and is evident their teaching,) and that he trusted to have at least Devonshire and Somersetshire under his influence for the purpose." (*Idem*, p. 31.)

But it may be objected that these citations are from Mr. Darby, who published them as his justification for withdrawing from Ebrington Street. Be it so. As long as I have no reason to impeach his veracity, I dare not question it. But I have other witnesses to confirm his allegations. I advisedly produce one who is well known to have hostile feelings towards him, and stands apart from him to this day, who cannot, therefore, be considered his partisan. I mean Lord Congleton. In a tract entitled, "Reasons for leaving Rawstorne Street Meeting, London," dated February 27th, 1847, he published the following statements:—

"I have all along, ever since I was at Plymouth, in December, 1845, said I felt that there was a sectarian and clerical spirit among the people of Ebrington Street," (p. 5.) In a letter to Mr. Gough, dated December 22nd, 1846, given in this tract, p. 11, he says—  
 "I cannot identify myself with Ebrington Street meeting." Again, whilst assigning his opinion that "Mr. Darby had no *palpable* reasons for his act of separation," he admits, p. 21—"There seemed to be much deficiency, much failure, a sectarian spirit, a

clerical spirit, but nothing sufficiently decided to warrant such an act." Again, "Evils there were." (p. 10.)

It will be seen by these acknowledgments how fully Lord Congleton corroborates Mr. Darby's charges against Ebrington Street. The difference between them is, that he thinks there may be divisions organized, clericalism established, and evils allowed, *within* the assembly; and Mr. Darby believes that the allowance of them is a sufficient reason to leave any assembly. The former, without any warrant from Scripture, would not break bread with them in Ebrington Street, "simply on these grounds, that they did not do all they might have done to prevent the division," (p. 5.) The latter, submitting to the paramount claims of God's Word, (Rom. xvi. 17,) withdrew from their meeting because division *had been made by them—sectarianism professed by them.* Lord Congleton retired from Rawstone Street because the brethren there received Mr. Darby and Mr. Wigram without taking any notice of his charges against them for leaving and judging the evil which he *admits* existed in Ebrington Street (See p. 10,) and which he left himself.

This tract of his is as curious a specimen of special pleading as ever was presented to the public. After saying, in page 9, "there was no true bill brought against Mr. Newton," he himself finds one against him in p. 21, as above quoted. Whilst advocating the innocence of his client, he transforms himself into a witness, and proves his guilt. What strange inconsistencies we fall into, when we allow our own wills

and feelings to guide and influence us, instead of God's Word and Spirit !

I will bring another witness to testify the sad state in which the Plymouth meeting was, prior to the separation, in regard to the party spirit that was fostered, and the non-recognition of the Spirit that was practised there. He is one who had been Mr. Newton's co-adjutor in all his varied forms of iniquity, and a most indefatigable supporter of his evil system ; one who keeps aloof from Mr. Darby, and is one of the most determined opposers to these doctrines of the New Testament. I allude to Mr. Soltau. In his "Confession of Error," published December 22nd, 1847, p. 5, he says :—

"And now I found myself, whilst hoping I had been a guardian of truth, really holding and circulating error. Here then I question not is that which the hand of the Lord has been more immediately against. He has allowed these errors in doctrine to develop themselves, in order to awaken myself and others to our sin, in forming or making one of a party for any object however right—He has confounded all I have been *thus* seeking to sustain, because the way in which it was sustained was not of His Spirit.

"And what have been the effects of this upon my own soul, and the souls of others connected with me in it ? *Man's guidance has in measure been substituted for the guidance of God.* Human wisdom and expediency have too often taken the place of faith. Individual responsibility has been sacrificed to united judgment and action. Service has supplanted communion with God. Energies which, if they had been the result of personal love for the Lord, and faith in Him, would have flowed out happily in caring for the poor of the flock, have too often been used to *sustain a system* in the midst of which grievous error has now been found to be working ; and natural energy has been frequently *substituted* for the *power and presence of the Spirit.* In my own breast I am conscious an *antagonistic*, as well as over-anxious spirit has *hereby* been engendered ; and that wisdom which is from above, which is 'peaceable, and

without partiality and without hypocrisy,' has been greatly lacking. I do, indeed, desire to confess this as great evil in the sight of God, and to beg any of those brethren in Christ whom I may have grieved by these things, or their fruits, to pardon the want of grace and love that has been in my heart or ways towards them."

"What I have already said may suffice to act as a warning to others, not to lose sight of personal communion with, and love for the Lord, in the midst of the activities of service. *Not to form a party* for any, even the holiest objects. Not to forget in local interests the whole Church of God, purchased by the blood of the Lamb.

"In conclusion, I will only add that I have endeavoured, with prayer to God, to write this paper truthfully, neither stating, in exaggerated expressions, my sense of my sin, nor wishing to extenuate or palliate. I am well aware how difficult this is, and I pray the Lord to forgive all, even in this confession, wherein I err, either from want of truthfulness, or from too feeble an appreciation of the evil. I doubt not that my estimate will daily (as it has hitherto) deepen, both as to the *doctrinal errors* I have held, or been implicated in, and as to the *wrong position* in which I have stood. I am almost in the worst circumstances for fully appreciating either, seeing I have but so lately myself perceived them.

"HENRY W. SOLTAU."

Here, again, we have another witness confirming all that Mr. Darby has alleged about God having been practically displaced at that meeting—the Spirit's presence and guidance not being owned, and man's authority, or clericalism, substituted, and sectarianism cultivated. I do not adduce this confession to show that Mr. Soltau apprehended Church truths, which alone would deliver him from Mr. N.'s "system," but to prove the party that was formed, and the spirit that actuated them. Had he seen these truths, doubtless he would have confessed his own erroneous views about the Church; but this he does not, for the doctrines which he acknowledges to be wrong are those con-



cerning the Lord Jesus, as we shall presently see. And what is the consequence of his faith not rising to the height of the Church's calling? His present position.

In further confirmation of the system that was clandestinely established at Plymouth, in violation of the professed principles of "Brethren," I may quote an extract from the most learned of any of Mr. Newton's advocates. Dr. Tregelles, who is well acquainted with the whole of the circumstances, observes:—

"It had been the endeavour of Mr. Newton to prevent the Brethren at Plymouth from adopting the *practices* and *opinions*, as to ministry and absence of order, into which those in other places, professing to hold the same principles, were running. In this endeavour he was for some years *successful*, so that there was at Plymouth the definite recognition of ministry, such as was not unsuitably termed '*modified Presbyterianism*.' . . . This led to the course of action carried on against him by Mr. Darby and his associates, at first privately, and from the year 1845 and onwards, publicly." See "Five Letters to the Editor of the *Record* on Recent Denials of our Lord's Vicarious Life." By S. P. TREGELLES, LL.D., p. 12.

Any person having the slightest acquaintance with the difference between the principles of Brethren and Presbyterians on ministry and Church order, will have no difficulty in perceiving how discordant the elements which Mr. Newton introduced must have been to Brethren who valued God's principles. It was utterly impossible for any who had faith in them as truths of God not to come into direct collision with Mr. Newton when he sought to substitute Presbyterianism for them. It is a remarkable fact, that nearly all those who condemn Mr. Darby for separating from the Plymouth meeting have set up something like this kind of clerical

government. They have either openly become Independent ministers, or secretly exercised the office and authority of the clergyman. There is a measure of consistency, therefore, in their opposition; but as long as they profess to belong to Brethren, they are not so consistent as Mr. Newton and Dr. Tregelles, who completely reject them, and disclaim all connection with them. The latter distinctly declares that the former succeeded in establishing at Plymouth, (before the separation in the year 1845,) a system of his own creation, termed "modified Presbyterianism." He further adds, that Mr. Newton had no fellowship with their doctrines and practices during some of the years that he ostensibly remained with them. He says:—

"From the time that the Brethren adopted their present doctrines and practices, Mr. Newton has had no connection with them of any kind. He sought to keep some amongst them from straying wildly; but when this in general did not succeed, neither he nor any who maintained that pastors and teachers are the definite ordinance of Christ, and who held fast the dogmatic teaching of the Protestant confessions, have had any fellowship with the Brethren. This has been definitely the case since 1847, and it was *practically so for some years before.*"—*Idem*, p. 13.

There are not any Christians who more thankfully acknowledge "pastors and teachers," as the gifts of Christ to the Church, than Brethren; but they do not admit the official assumption of them by designing men, who may make use of these scriptural titles only to hide their ambition whilst seeking the clerical post. Their refusal to submit to this kind of assumption was one of the reasons of Mr. Newton's antagonism to them, which Dr. Tregelles plainly avows, but badly defends. When

we state his doctrine concerning the Lord Jesus, we shall see that the reference to "the dogmatic teaching of the Protestant confessions" no more shields his erroneous views on this solemn subject than the sly use of the terms "pastors and teachers" does his self-constituted ecclesiastical rank.

I now turn to the opposition against the hope of the immediate coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to take "His own" to Himself.

For years before the separation Mr. Newton taught that the Church was in the scene depicted in Matthew xxiv.; would therefore pass through the tribulation described there and in Rev. vii.; consequently would have to undergo the persecution under Antichrist, spoken of in 2 Thessalonians ii. and Revelation xiii., &c.; hence the Church should not expect the return of her Lord until after the restoration of the Jews, and the revelation of Antichrist. He was most assiduous in conveying these thoughts by various vehicles, I might say almost throughout the known world—Ireland, India, America, Australia, received his prophetic views in letters, and his arguments against those differing from him. Manuscripts, tracts, books, were all set in motion to disseminate his notions, and to denounce the doctrine of the rapture of the Church before the end. "Particular meetings of his own for inculcating his peculiar views were multiplied without end, and sisters instructed in them, and provided with notes, employed to hold smaller meetings among the poor, and to write letters elsewhere to propagate them. Every visitor was at once brought under the most stringent process for

imbuing him with them, and instruments sought wherever possible.”—“Narrative of Facts,” p. 12.

His prophetic views are so generally known that I need only refer to his “Thoughts on the Apocalypse,” to show that I have not misrepresented them.

“The church of the first-born, looked at in its unity as one body, will be regarded in the dispensations to come as that which has passed through and out of the great tribulation.”—P. 99. “It would seem that during the whole period of the smoothness and deceit of Antichrist, Christians and Christian testimony remain in Jerusalem.”—P. 124. To prepare the mind for these reckless assertions, he gives an elaborate argument on the words, “Things new and old,” in which he gradually distils the notion that the new hope of the Christian is the same as the old hope of the Jew. Censuring those who had not seen this, he says, “The ancient promises to Israel, instead of being blended into harmony with the new hopes ministered by Jesus and His Apostles, were forgotten or despised, and the consequence was that Gentile Christianity soon became useless for God’s purposes of practical testimony in the earth.”—P. 92.

“It was the union of ‘the things new and old’ that gave such power and energy to the testimony and service of the Apostle Paul.”—P. 93. “When Christianity is again found amidst Israel in Jerusalem, and when Antichristianism has brought back the kingdoms of the prophetic earth into their former place of avowed opposition to all that is of God, then, *if not before*, the expectation of Jesus as the Messiah of

Israel, and of the judgments that will accompany his return, will *again* form part of the hopes and testimony of Christianity in Jerusalem.”—P. 94.

In this manner he reduces the Christian's hope to a level with the Jew's, making the Church's expectation to consist in seeing “The Messiah of Israel;” and without any authority whatever, tells us that “Christianity will be found in Jerusalem under Antichrist.” I need not quote more. He and his partisans teach the same things to this day. If in a book written with the most studied and laboured style such statements be found, what may not the manuscripts and oral teachings contain?

I have now shown that the Church's proper heavenly calling, her being a habitation of God by the Spirit, her hope of meeting the Lord in the air previous to the manifestation of the “Man of Sin,” were most systematically and practically denied by Mr. Newton, the leader of the Plymouth meeting.

Besides the doctrines that were taught at Plymouth to counteract the Church truths which distinguish “Brethren,” there were some others equally erroneous, viz. :—In a Gospel tract to the careless, sold at the depot, “it is taught that the wicked will rise with their diseased bodies; so that a man that had the palsy would keep it for ever, they would receive again their corrupt, sin-worn bodies in all their wretchedness.”—Introduction to “Narrative of Facts,” p. iii. It was taught that “the Old Testament saints had not life.”—*Idem.* In “Thoughts on the Apocalypse,” it is stated that the glorified saints will possess the attri-

butes of "omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotency,"—pp. 49-51, "and that they will participate in the counsels of God." A favourite argument of the clerical party there, to prove their superiority to all who were not of the same rank, was, that "five cyphers never could make one." The excellent answer of a brother who heard it, whilst happening to be there, was, "If the Spirit of God was there as *one* before them, the five cyphers would be 100,000."—"Narrative," p. 3.

So much for your assertions that "*then* (*i.e.* previous to the separation) there was not any evil in *doctrine* discovered." You are not even correct in intimating that it was after the secession that the "evil teaching respecting our Blessed Lord" was first brought to light. Mr. Darby notices that he heard the following teaching in Ebrington-street when he was there:—

"I have myself heard it taught from Heb. ix. 27, that Christ had to be judged *after His death* as another man. As it was appointed to men to die, and He was a man. It has been taught that Christ was *born under death*, being a constituted sinner, and worked His way *up to life by His obedience*. So on Lev. i., that covering sin was not merely by sacrificial atonement, making satisfaction for it, but that Christ's devoting Himself, as typified by the burnt-offering, made up by a thing of the *like kind* for our imperfect devotedness; and what a blessing it was that it should be of the like kind, and so filled up and completed, its defects covered."—"Narrative of Facts," p. 24.

You cannot fail to observe the identity of the doctrine here announced, with that which was afterwards discovered and avowed. If Mr. Darby were the kind of man that some represent him, would he not have laid hold of these expressions, and called on the assembly

to remove the teacher of such blasphemy? Doubtless he would and should have done so, had he known it was a deliberately devised doctrine; but deeming it only inaccuracy in teaching, he let it pass, not suspecting (as it subsequently proved) that it was the result of a well-defined system of theology. I desire grace to admire the wisdom and power of God, who directed and enabled His servant to expose and judge the unscriptural church system that then and there engendered such a doctrine, and now elsewhere extends it.

I will now relate some of *the doings* at Plymouth prior to the secession. We shall see that the "corrupt tree brought forth evil fruit."

In a printed letter of Mr. Newton's, dated 18th April, 1845, published by his friends in a pamphlet, entitled "Correspondence relating to Mr. Newton's refusal to appear before the Saints at Rawstorne-street, London," he avows his hostile feelings to the doctrines promulgated by other brethren, and that he would kindle like feelings wherever he could. When we consider the vast influence he wielded, we need not wonder at his success, as recorded in the "Narrative of Facts." He thus writes in p. 33 of the "Correspondence"—"I distinctly avow that I cannot welcome as teachers, with the same cordiality, one who opposes, and one who sustains, what I believe to be truth." "I desire to produce in the minds of the dear brethren everywhere, the same strong sense that pervades my own, of the evil of this system, *and this is one object of my labour everywhere.* At the same time my *hostility* is against a system, not against individuals." This letter was

originally written to Mr. Clulow, who printed it, as purporting to give an account of the proceedings of the meeting, held 15th of same month, to investigate the charges made against Mr. N. Both of them were present. It was considered so bad and sectarian that even Mr. Soltau got it suppressed, but Mr. N. himself subsequently circulated it again. It "is confessedly now *not a true account of the meeting,*" ("Narrative of Facts," p. 36,) but it says enough to manifest the kind of feelings that actuated him in his bitter opposition, and that prompted him to conspire with another to give a false report of the meeting.

Mr. N. was charged with not allowing brethren to minister who differed from his views, in proof of which one of his famous five MSS. was referred to. He *then* printed this MS., saying he had omitted some and altered more passages, but in substance it was the same as the original. He gives the following account of it himself in his "Defence," published in the work above mentioned:—

"In the course of last summer I thought it desirable to publish the first of the aforesaid five letters. There is a passage in the MS. letter which had been much objected to on account of its supposed severity. It is as follows:—

"So also in the Gospels, many instructions which were addressed to the disciples, in their then circumstances, were of course limited to the time then present. But it is not so with those passages which were professedly future, and addressed to them as His servants, during the time of His personal absence from them. *With respect to such passages, we have a right to expect a clear, unhesitating answer from all who teach in the Church,* for it has been well said, that ambiguities should be avoided in the Church of God."—P. 25.



He omitted and altered far more, as he hints in his "Declaration," p. 27 :—"I esteemed *all other* changes as sufficiently expressed by the word '*alterations.*'" Let us hear Mr. Darby's account of this transaction:—

"Mr. Newton published the first letter of the five, which had been circulating six years in MS., denouncing the brethren with the following advertisement :—'The following letter was written some years ago, in reply to the inquiries of a friend, who resides in Norfolk. It is now published with some omissions and alterations, but in substance it remains the same.' What was my astonishment to find, on comparing it, that a quarter nearly of the printed matter was not in the MS. letter at all—partly mixed up, but chiefly added to the end; and that the new matter consisted of reasonings *against* the doctrines he was charged with holding now, as to the authority of teachers. So that these charges appeared most wanton and unfounded, inasmuch as six years ago the person charged had actually written *against* the things he was now charged with. This is all woven in at the end of the letter so as to form part of it."—"Narrative of Facts," p. 37.

What can you think of such diplomacy as this in the teacher of that meeting? Is there nothing wrong in practice here? Take only his own admission even, and you see the deceit. Again :—

"On a Sunday morning an aged gentleman stood up to speak. Mr. B., who had been left in charge of the meeting, as was customary, the other chief leaders being absent, pulled him back to his seat by the tail of his coat, and closed the meeting. On another Sunday morning meeting, the sisters tried to put him down by scraping with their feet. The Sunday following, before the brother who broke bread reached his seat to sit down, Mr. N. jumped up, so as to prevent any one's speaking. I was informed by several brethren that this was constantly the practice. I speak of what I saw. During the week I spoke to Mr. Soltau, and said it was impossible that all this could go on. He replied it was very bad, it was regular jockeyship. I called his attention to his expression. He repeated, Well, I say it again, it was regular jockeyship.

I said, do you feel the force of what you are saying, if the presence of God is thought of in the meeting, what jockeyship would be there?"—*Id.* p. 30.

"On another occasion a brother stood up to speak for the first time in the meeting. He spoke a little nervously in manner, but gave a godly and useful exhortation on really crucifying self if we celebrated the Cross, and then pressed the evil of aiming at any importance for oneself. I asked Mr. Harris who he was, as we went out. He said, he is a godly, humble man, but it will make a proper hubbub, and he will catch it, or some such expression. He was accordingly set at, so as to be effectually dismayed. Nor was there one, as is well known at Plymouth, who spoke more strongly against the kind of tyranny which was practised there, and the hindrance of all liberty in ministry, or otherwise taking part in the meeting. Mr. N. asked Mr. Harris to stop him, declaring it was a sin against the order of God's Church, but he declined. However, he had been quite sufficiently cowed by other means already. How did this history close? He was given a weekly allowance, and sent to preach. In one of the meetings, held by Mr. N. by invitation, to explain things, after the brethren who came to inquire were gone, this brother stood up and testified that he never had been hindered, but always encouraged to speak, Mr. N. and Mr. Soltau, who knew all that had passed, sitting by."—*Idem.*, p. 42.

What an awful delusive system that could ensnare a brother like this in its meshes!

Mr. Hill, an eminently devoted man, was stopped praying. A poor brother gave out a hymn. Nobody would raise it. "Mr. N. himself, at a prayer meeting, got up and went and sat down by the side of a young brother, who gave out a hymn, and laid hold of his book. The hymn was at last raised, but he was asked if he meant to pray too."—*Idem.*, p. 22.

The late Mr. Bellett, who happened one summer to be in the vicinity of Plymouth, received an intimation that his presence would not be desirable at their meetings, and he did not go.

I need not adduce more instances to prove the ungodly doings of Plymouth ; I have mentioned enough to show the value of your assertion, that “*then* there was no evil in practice discovered.” If lying, deceit, ecclesiastical tyranny, and shutting out such a godly and loving man as Mr. Bellett from communion, be not “evil practice,” I know not what is.

Mr. Darby found evil both in “doctrine and practice” when he arrived at Plymouth from the Continent, on the invitation of Mr. Harris, who had long groaned under the state of things there, and who ceased to minister, because he would not consent to be a party in bearing testimony *against* other brethren. Mr. D. at once saw that it was a question between God and Satan, and acted accordingly. From the time that Mr. N. so plainly avowed his determined purpose to promote in every way he could united testimony against all who taught doctrines different to his own, Mr. D. felt he should bring the matter before the congregation. This was on 15th April, 1845. He did not do so, out of deference to the opinion of other brethren. He regrets he was not more decided ; for God, though He graciously sustained him, did not give any efficacy to a step he took, until he judged the evil according to God’s appointed way (Rom. xvi. and 2 Cor. vi.) at the close of the same year.

After six months of patient waiting on brethren to remedy the evil, and finding that nothing was done, that even the Friday meeting where brethren met to consult on matters connected with the welfare and ordering of the assembly was discontinued by Mr. N’s

authority, and would not be renewed lest persons obnoxious to him should attend it, and lest any measures should be passed of which he did not approve, then Mr. Darby brought the subject before the congregation, "on Sunday, 26th October, 1845." He did not spread a second table until "28th December, 1845." See Lord Congleton's letter, p. 9, published in his "Reasons for leaving Rawstorne-street Meeting."

I will now give, in Mr. Darby's own words, what was done on that solemn and memorable occasion :—

"On Sunday I detained the assembly, and told them that it was a matter of the deepest sorrow, but that I was going to quit the assembly. I felt it impossible to enter into details. It would have been a string of miserable facts, the public ones of which have been detailed here, and practically an accusation of others. I therefore refrained from them entirely, and only stated the principles on which I went; that I felt God was practically displaced; and more particularly, that there was a subversion of the principles on which we met. That there was an evil and unrighteousness unconfessed and unjudged; and as a collateral point, that the Friday meeting, which was a means of inquiry and service, had been suppressed, and refused to be restored, so that the remedy for much was taken away. I then left the assembly."—  
"Narrative of Facts," p. 43.

By request he attended a meeting on an evening the following week, and gave more details of the working of the evil. But I need not proceed further. There were sectarianism of the worst kind dividing those "within;" clericalism tyrannising over all who impeded it; false teaching setting aside every truth of God that opposed it; and deeds that ought to make all blush who bear the name of "brethren." These terrible and published facts comport badly with your assertion that, *then* neither in doctrine or practice was any evil discovered.

From these evils this beloved brother separated ; and has he not Scripture to sanction such a step? Does God's Word warrant any other course? Is it not written, "What communion hath light with darkness? Wherefore come out from among them, and touch not the unclean, and I will receive you."—2 Cor. vi. 17. "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."—2 Tim. ii. 19. (The best authorities give this as the correct reading.)

Can you doubt that the studied and avowed hostility of Mr. Newton and his partisans to the truths of God, was from Satan? Surely God could not be the author of the confusion that was in that meeting. He is not the author of any confusion. Compare 1 Cor. xiv. 33, and James iii. 16. It was not God who raised up a testimony *against* His own Word and servants. As I write I am impressed more than ever with the deep solemnity of the conflict of that moment. If you will have it a "controversy," it was a controversy between God and Satan. May the Lord turn your thoughts aright towards it, and deepen the conviction in both our souls of the vast importance of that contest.

Have you any misgivings that brethren are responsible to God for the maintenance of the truths committed to them? You may say that we did not require the confession of them, prior to receiving into fellowship. Very true. Nor do we now, although in a recent tract by J. M. C. we are falsely accused of it. But if any, instead of taking the place of learners in the Church, persist in teaching counter doctrines, and form parties for their dissemination, and to testify

*against* the divine truths entrusted to us, we are bound by every sense of faithfulness to refuse them, and to remove them if admitted. If we had not that power by reason of their undue influence over the congregation, we should withdraw from them. If you ask for Scripture to authorise such a course, I beg to refer you to Rom. xvi. 17, "Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them;" or more literally, "turn away *from* them." I read in Eph. iv. 27, "Neither give place to the devil." Would it not be giving place to, or making room for him, to allow him to deprive us of all the peculiar truths revealed in this same epistle to the Ephesians? Is there no force in the exhortation, "Put on the *whole* armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil"—Eph. vi. When we see those who profess to care for the Church, permitting her to be spoiled of all her distinguishing beauty, lowered from heaven to earth, consigned from God to man, her bright prospects darkened, and the one fond hope of her heart blighted, and at the same time immeasurably condemning those who would preserve these privileges and prerogatives for her, if we had hearts equal to the occasion we should bewail the conduct of such watchmen, and mournfully exclaim, Alas! they have not put on the "whole armour," and therefore have admitted the enemy, and given him an opportunity to triumph.

You will notice that Lord Congleton's letter tells us that Mr. Darby remained from 26th October to 28th December without spreading another table. He did so

at the request of other brethren who came from distant places to try and heal matters ; the result of their investigation was, "that all who were not, and did not come as avowed partisans of Mr. Newton, declined breaking bread any longer in Ebrington-street."—"Narrative of Facts," p. 47. These brethren returned to their respective homes ; Mr. Darby remained.

What were the people to do who had come to the same conclusion in conscience as he did, and that from much longer and fuller evidence of the workings of the evil, being residents there, and who could not leave Plymouth ? Would Mr. Darby be acting the part of a faithful shepherd, if he had fled and left these sheep to the assaults of the wolf ? Was he not responsible to remain and watch over them, and seek their edification "in faith and love ?" The enemy had come in like a flood, and, thank God, His Spirit lifted up a standard against him.

I earnestly trust that the presentation of these facts may induce you to reconsider the part you have taken in relation to these momentous transactions. If you are given to see that your hasty assertions cannot be substantiated, and that they are at variance with the history of the Plymouth meeting, you will have to attribute the "sin of twenty years" to a very different source from that to which your circular does. You will then acknowledge, dear brother, that your call to prayer and humiliation was founded on false premises.

Before noticing your extenuation of Bethesda's guilt, I must state what the erroneous doctrine is, which you so justly term "evil teaching respecting the Person of

our Blessed Lord," in order that we may in any adequate degree form an estimate of the sinful principle which connects and identifies all with it who have adopted this principle as their guide in church relationship. As I do not know any publication that expresses this dreadful doctrine more clearly or fully than the confession of Mr. Soltau, from which I have already quoted, I will again copy from it :—

“ A CONFESSION OF ERROR.

“ Dec. 22nd, 1847.

“ Deeply feeling, as I trust I do, my solemn responsibility to God and His Church, I desire now to confess openly and unreservedly the errors in Christian doctrine in which I have been involved, or with which I have been connected, trusting also that through the Lord’s mercy any further evil results of such errors may be averted, and that where souls have already been damaged, He may in His grace heal and restore. The errors to which I allude are twofold.

“ First—I have held that the Blessed Lord Jesus was so closely by birth identified with the fallen family of man, as to come under the imputation of Adam’s guilt, which rested on them ; and in consequence was treated by God as one of the rebel family, suffering therefore under His hand many of the penalties which attached to that family ; but that in these circumstances He stood pure and sinless, and proved Himself before God in His thoughts and ways the Righteous One, though dwelling in the midst of sinners.

“ Second—The second error which I have to confess is one I believe more subtle than the first, and which I fear has produced more baneful effects in others. It is this—That the Lord was by birth so connected with the nation of Israel, as to be made to feel from the hand of God their ruined and awful condition in His sight, as under the curse of the broken law. That the living experiences of the Lord, therefore, were frequently those of distance from God—of terror pressed upon His soul by God—of wrath and curse. That He had, however, seasons of relief and comfort and brightness, partly owing to His own perfect obedience and faith and prayer ; and partly through the direct interference of God.



“Tracts containing these doctrines have been submitted to me for approval, fully sanctioned and circulated by me ; and I have, under the influence, I doubt not, of these errors, applied some expressions in the Psalms to the living experiences of Christ, which now I believe are only applicable to the Cross.

“I now desire humbly, and yet earnestly, to express my contrition for having in any way held or circulated such false doctrines. I believe them to be truly dangerous and pernicious to souls. I now perceive that they do affect the person and relation and work of the Blessed Lord. That had He been by birth under any imputation of guilt Himself, He could not have cleared Himself from it by any life of righteousness, but that death and condemnation was the penalty ; and He could not, therefore, have died for us. Or that had He been under any imputation of curse, He could not have relieved Himself from it, but must have suffered the penalty of death and condemnation, and He could not, therefore, have died for us.

“These I now fully perceive are some of the legitimate results of such doctrines, and fearful indeed they are. Moreover, another serious error is involved in them, and that is the dividing the Person of Christ. Experiences of mere humanity have been attributed to Him, and the Person and consequently the true experiences of THE SON have not been truly held.”

This then is the doctrine that was held and secretly circulated at Plymouth previous to the separation, but not fully brought to light or avowed by its teachers until after that event. That it occasionally appeared in their interpretations of Scripture, we have seen in the “Narrative of Facts.” Looked at retrospectively, it casts its dark shade on, and accounts for, much of the proceedings of that place ; prospectively, it reveals the condition of many places that have no scriptural barrier to protect them from its “baneful effects.”

After this false doctrine was discovered and exposed, Mr. Newton published a tract, dated 26th November, 1847, entitled, “A statement and acknowledgment re-

specting certain doctrinal errors," in which he admits having held one part of the doctrine stated by Mr. Soltau, and which he apparently acknowledges as error, but in reality repeats it in a more aggravated form. I will place in juxta-position two quotations from it, to show what reliance can be placed on his *quasi* confessions, and with what consummate skill he sought to deceive. One of the paragraphs is his statement of what he considers "right" doctrine, and what he "should have stated;" the other is his description of what he calls his "error:"—

MR. NEWTON'S CONFESSION OF  
FAITH.

"In allowing that the Lord Jesus had a body different from that of Adam in paradise, I was *right*. I was *right* also in saying that inherent corruption is not the originating cause of mortality, but the one sin of Adam—'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.' I was *right* also in stating that the Lord Jesus partook of certain consequences of Adam's sin, of which the being possessed of a mortal body was one.

"It was this that first introduced Rom. v. into the controversy, as showing that death of the body resulted from that which one man had done; and if due care had been taken to discriminate between the mode in which the consequences of Adam's trans-

MR. NEWTON'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT  
OF ERROR.

"My error in this resulted in my holding that the Lord Jesus, while perfectly free from all, even the slightest taint of sin, either original or actual, yet was under Adam, as a federal head, and thus was exposed by his position to the imputation of Adam's *guilt*, as is taught respecting mankind in Romans v. I saw it to be distinctly revealed that the Lord was subject to hunger, thirst, weariness, sorrow, &c., which things we know are consequences of the fall; and I erred in attributing His participation in these afflictions to a federal relationship to Adam.

"Recent circumstances having necessitated a *careful* review of the whole subject, I have been led, as *I have above stated*, to

gression reached mankind through federal headship, and the manner in which the Lord Jesus took certain of those consequences upon Himself, but *not* through federal headship, the error which I have now to confess would have been avoided.

“If I had watched this, I should have carefully avoided the referring that part of Romans v. to the Lord Jesus, and *I should have stated* that His connection with these consequences *was* in virtue of His *having been made of a woman*, and *thus* brought Himself into *association with a race* on whom these *penalties were resting*. In other words, that when the Eternal Word became flesh, He thereby voluntarily placed Himself in association with those on whom certain penalties, such as loss of paradise, hunger, thirst, exhaustion, and pain, had come as consequences of the fall; and that in virtue of such association He partook of those consequences, even all the consequences in which He could share, unconnected with personal sin.”—Pp. 3 and 4.

see that I was distinctly in error in holding that the Lord Jesus came by birth under any imputation of guilt, or the consequences of such imputation.

“I see that results altogether contrary to Christian doctrine are involved in, and may fairly be deduced from *this error*, which I now desire explicitly to renounce; and I desire to acknowledge *my error* in having *thus* held and taught on this subject; and I hereby withdraw all statements of mine, whether *in print*, or in *any other form*, in which *this error*, or *any of its fruits*, may be found.”—P. 5.

The only confession of error in the whole tract is what he states in page 5, in attributing the consequences of Adam's fall to the Blessed Lord, because of His federal relationship to Adam; but in page 4 he ascribes all these consequences, and even worse (certain

penalties due to the fall), to His "having been made of a woman," and this he holds to be *right*. He thus merely shifts his ground from Adam to the woman, and what is the difference? How could any one be connected with Adam as a federal head, except by being born of a woman? Mr. N. saw this himself, and therefore he substitutes the phrase "came by birth," for "under Adam as a federal head," connecting the one idea by the words, "as I have above stated," thus making the two sentences convey the same error. What is the difference between saying that he is "*right*" in holding that Christ "having been made of a woman" came under the penalties which were resting on a fallen race, and saying that he was *wrong* "in holding that the Lord Jesus came *by birth* under any imputation of guilt, or the consequences of such imputation?" What are penalties, but consequences of guilt?

Mr. N. must have counted largely on the credulity and stolidity of his readers, when he thought this tract would have been received by them as a confession and withdrawal of his erroneous doctrine. He does indeed acknowledge what he taught about federal relationship "*as error*," but acknowledges it only to present the *false doctrine* in a shape more suitable to his purpose. He does not even allude to the second part of this awful doctrine which he promulgated, and which puts the Lord Jesus Christ under the guilt and condemnation of a broken law; and which (Mr. Soltau states) is "more subtle than the first."

Yet this is the tract to which some of Mr. Newton's

defenders refer in a recent publication, called "The Exclusive Brethren," to prove his recantation and withdrawal of this doctrine, and in which they grossly misrepresent them. I do not know whether the writers of this work are capable of judging Mr. N.'s doctrines, or detecting his deception; but this I know, that in the most dishonest manner they have omitted to quote in their extract from this tract (given in page 20 of their pamphlet) the doctrine which he states to be "*right*," and which he expresses *to his satisfaction* in page 4. They also omit his statement in page 5, wherein he says that his error consisted in attributing certain consequences of the fall to the Lord Jesus, because of his "*federal* relationship to Adam." Lest there should be the slightest clue to the error he acknowledges, they leave out his words, "as I have above stated," from their citation, and only give the part in which he owns his error "in holding that the Lord Jesus came by birth"—that is, federal relationship (as explained by him), &c.; thus artfully leaving the impression on their readers that Mr. Newton had fully renounced the whole of his erroneous doctrine. If they had given what he says in page 4, it would have so palpably contradicted what they do give from page 5, that they craftily discard it, and all reference to it, thus completely concealing the *extent* of his confession.

The moral worth of persons capable of such an act will be borne in mind, when reading in the parallel column of the same page the manner in which they hold Mr. Darby up to public reprobation, because he

censures Mr. Müller for misleading the saints by telling them what was contrary to facts, that "Mr. Newton had retracted publicly before God and the world, with the *fullest confession, the error he had held.*" By only giving the garbled extract I have mentioned, and placing parallel to it Mr. Darby's accusation of Mr. Müller, they acquit the latter, and brand the former as a false accuser.

Your allusion to the Bristol meeting is particularly unhappy, for you ought to remember that clericalism was as dominant there as at Plymouth. You should not forget nor suppress, as you have done, Mr. Code's account of its doings. He prepared and read a paper in Brunswick-street in your presence, in which he stated facts to which he was an eye-witness at Bethesda, which are diametrically opposed to your representation of it. You say that "*at the first* the brethren there could not see their way to exclude persons who came from Plymouth where the evil doctrine was taught, but who were not themselves infected with it, although *afterwards*, when the tendency of that teaching was better understood, several persons were excluded from the meeting at Bethesda." In this ambiguous style you imply that none who were infected themselves with the evil doctrine from Plymouth, would be received at Bristol; and that even those who were not infected with it, were excluded from the Bristol meeting, when the tendency of the evil doctrine at Plymouth was better understood. You have not given any authority for this assertion, and it is in direct variance not only with Mr. Code's statement, which you heard,

in his address to the Brunswick-street meeting, but also with that of several brethren who resided there, and even with the published documents of the Bethesda people themselves, which I will now show.

Mr. Code told us that, "*at the first,*" persons were allowed to remain in communion at Bethesda who held Mr. Newton's blasphemous opinions, and others were let in against all warnings. The Woodfalls and Mrs. Brown were recognised as belonging to Mr. N.'s meeting. He brought the case of a lady who not only held, but was circulating tracts containing the false doctrines before Messrs Müller and Craik, (the leading teachers at Bethesda) at their Friday meeting in the vestry-room, where church matters were considered. In order to prevent the Plymouth question being brought forward at that meeting, they removed it to Mr. Müller's own house, Code, Stancombe, and Naish being excluded, whilst Aitcheson was present (a known partisan of Mr. Newton's), who acknowledged his agreement with him, and has since left Bethesda and joined him. Some of those in fellowship called for an examination and condemnation of tracts that were diffusing their poison in their midst, alleging that they contained "deadly heresy," doctrines subversive of the atonement, and touching the Person and glory of Jesus Christ our Lord. This was after the publication of the confessions of the errors by Batten, Soltau, and Dyer. These confessions, Mr. Code informed us, Mr. Müller had read; yet such was the infatuation and perversion of Messrs. Müller and Craik, that the former said he had *the testimony of the Holy Ghost*

*that they ought not to judge the doctrines up to that time ; and the latter said that he should almost need a revelation from heaven to induce him to read the tracts.*

By this obstinate refusal to judge the evil, they forced out a number of godly and gracious brethren, whose consciences would not permit them to be associated with it.

Mr. Code also said that when on one occasion he was urging the necessity of removing from communion the lady above referred to, who was an active emissary of Mr. Newton's, that Mr. Craik replied to him, in the presence of Mr. Müller and the lady herself, by asking him this awful question—"If the Lord Jesus had taken poison, would He not have died?" Mr. Code very properly answered that he would not trust himself to reply to such a blasphemous and irreverent question. If this question be a little analysed, it will be seen that it contains the germ of Mr. N.'s false doctrine. But I dare not pursue the thought further.

It is well known that Messrs. Müller and Craik had complete dominion over the meeting—nothing could be done without them ; therefore, when some brethren requested them to convene a meeting of the congregation to consider what was to be done respecting the evil doctrine which was there, they refused, and told them to ask the brethren themselves, well knowing that they would not come on their invitation. They had recourse to all kinds of trickery and subterfuges to make it appear that they had not any connection with the false doctrine. They issued a document signed by



themselves and eight more, since known by "The Letter of the Ten," in which the reasons of *each*, for not judging the evil doctrine in the tracts, and their future Church policy relative to it are given and *signed by all*. Mr. Code told us that some of those who signed that letter held the false doctrine at the time, but satisfied their consciences (if they had any) by the agreement that they were only responsible for their own part of the letter.

This document received the sanction of a public meeting convened for the purpose, in which the order was prescribed, no comment on the tracts or doctrines of Mr. Newton allowed. Mr. Stancombe rose to make some remarks, but was not permitted by the signers of the letter; he was publicly told to sit down, or that he should soon have the room to himself. The congregation then adopted the document, testifying their agreement with it by standing up. Mr. Code then stood up, and protested against it all, as not "according to God." Mr. Newton was afterwards eulogised by Mr. Aitcheson; Mr. Code called upon Mr. Craik to stop him, but in vain. (I have extracted the above from MS. notes taken of Mr. Code's address, and afterwards read in your meeting at Brunswick Street, by Mr. H. Bewley.)

I will produce other witnesses.

First, I produce yourself against yourself. Your manner of maintaining fellowship with Bethesda shows you do not deem it to be so pure a place as you try to make others believe by your circular. Previous to admitting into communion with you any who come

from thence, you examine them as to the soundness of their faith, thus showing you suspect the place, and have not confidence in its leaders. The time was, when a commendatory letter would be sufficient. By this mode you stand as much *self-condemned*, for your relationship to Bethesda, as you do for leaving the Establishment, when you imply that separation, on "a question of discipline and order, is wholly unwarranted by the Word of God." But you should also remember that the "question of discipline and order," *then* under consideration, was one which affected the vital and fundamental truths of Christianity and Christ. At our late interview you informed me that latterly you had discontinued this practice of examination, so that now there is open and unrestricted communion between Brunswick Street meeting and Bethesda. It is right that Christians should be apprised of this—that you both have become confessedly one. If any of Mr. Newton's followers wish to come to Brunswick Street, they have only to go first to Bethesda, and thence to you. There is no safety for "the flock of God" in this kind of "discipline and order." Any saint who desires to preserve the honour of the Lord Jesus, and to maintain pure Christian fellowship, is bound to withdraw from your communion on hearing this avowal.

Second—Mr. H. Bewley, to satisfy himself as to the state of Bethesda, and probably thinking he might have sufficient influence with Messrs. Müller and Craik, went to Bristol to induce them to consider the consequences of their doings. When he returned he read an address to the Brethren in Brunswick Street, in which he

relates the result of his visit in the following words :—

“At my late visit to Bethesda, the pastors and labouring brethren would not yield to me in the slightest on any one point in which I expostulated with them. I came away thoroughly disheartened. I believe them to be under the beguiling and blinding power of Satan. I believe Bethesda to be an unclean place before the Lord, and that, therefore, if I have fellowship with any of Bethesda, or with any who countenance and support, or intelligently have fellowship with Bethesda, I partake of their guilt and sin ; I thereby become an associator with them in dishonouring our Blessed Lord, and that I cannot consent to do.”

He gave a summary of his address by saying :—

“Let me now briefly recapitulate THE FACTS respecting the body meeting at Bethesda.

“1st. They took a neutral place where neutrality is guilt.

“2nd. They refused to judge blasphemous tracts which they should have condemned with indignation.

“3rd. They drove out a number of those whose consciences could not sanction them in such evil.

“4th. They vindicated their sinful refusal by a most unworthy document, the congregation committing themselves to it in the dark.

“5th. They admitted and retained persons in communion holding Mr. Newton's opinions.

“6th. They put forth an impure principle as a rule of Church action.

“7th. They are identified with Mr. Craik's published opinions, which are not only grossly irreverent and shocking to every spiritual mind, but so fundamentally unsound, that many consider this the worst feature of the whole case.”

Mr. Alexander, a brother resident there, after urging on those who guided Bethesda the necessity of judging the doctrines contained in the tracts which were in circulation amongst them, and after waiting in vain for some time in the hope that they would investigate the allegation that there were some at the table of the Lord

there who had fellowship, and were determined to continue that fellowship, with those who held and taught these doctrines, retired from their communion, and published the following reasons for so doing:—

“More than one hundred believers at Plymouth have testified of the evil of this doctrine, spoken of it as the work and delusion of Satan, have renounced it openly, and separated themselves on account of it. We have all, therefore, been fully aware, that a peculiarly solemn testimony has been given against it. The solemn question, as to the character of this doctrine, has been brought to our door here, by some coming to the table of the Lord who have had fellowship, and who desire (as I have been given to understand) to continue such fellowship, with those (at least with one) who held and taught such doctrine.

“After waiting some time in the hope that this subject would be thoroughly investigated and judged of, I find amongst the brethren who guide and labour here a *refusal* to do so, and an objection to do so *expressed* by many. . . Under the imputation, or suspicion, of harbouring and countenancing these evil doctrines I cannot remain; my conscience before God would not allow of it; and, therefore, while such a matter remains unjudged and uninvestigated, I feel that there is *positive, manifested evil*, and from such I am compelled to separate, under the word, ‘Cease to do evil.’”

I will next give two brief extracts from “The Letter of the Ten,” which show that the leaders of Bethesda themselves acknowledge that they would not judge the horrible doctrine in the tracts, and that they avow a *principle* for their guidance in relation to other Churches which would unite them to any heretical teacher whatever:—

“As approved brethren, in different places, have come to such different conclusions in reference to the *amount* of error contained in these tracts, we could neither desire nor expect that the saints here would be satisfied with the decision of one or two leading brethren.

“Even supposing that those who inquired into the matter had come to the same conclusion, touching the *amount* of positive error therein

contained, this would not have guided us in our decision respecting individuals coming from Plymouth. For, supposing the author of the tracts *fundamentally heretical*, this would not warrant us in rejecting those who came under his teaching, unless we were satisfied that they had *understood* and *imbibed views* essentially subversive of foundation-truth."

The principle expressed in this remarkable letter is that which guides Bethesda congregation at Bristol to this day, namely:—"Unless the leaders of the congregation were satisfied that persons coming from under the teaching of a *fundamentally heretical teacher* had understood and imbibed his views, they would be received by them into 'fellowship.'"

They were requested to withdraw it in order to prevent the divisions that ensued; but they would not. They were asked did they mean by the sentence that they would receive *from* the heretical teacher, but not allow any return *to* him, and so on, back and forwards, establishing interchange of communion. They would not say that such was their meaning. It is evident it was not.

Here, then, are varied and competent witnesses giving a testimony of the character of the Bristol meeting which makes it the very opposite to that intimated in your circular. The Bethesda leaders themselves flatly contradicting the insinuation that any were excluded from their meeting who were *not* "themselves infected with the evil doctrine," when that "doctrine was better understood." And all the others, giving overwhelming evidence to the fact, that "at the first" they received those who had imbibed the false doctrine, and refused to remove them from

their fellowship when called upon to do so. What a poor sense you must have in your own soul of what is due to God's holy presence, when you could think of entering it with such a representation of a place like Bethesda! It is shocking to all godly feeling to see such advocacy at a moment when calling to prayer. And that you were not in ignorance of its condition is proved, not only by the cautious way you received from it in Brunswick Street, but also from the words of the document which you assisted in forcing on the congregation there, much after the fashion of the Bethesda leaders, when in it you prohibited any further consideration as to the action required to disprove all connection with this evil. You know that the words of the document are—"We have heard, and we do believe, a shameful, irreverential, and vile expression attributed to Mr. Craik; and it has so offended many of us, especially from one who is a teacher, that many of us, and I for one, would be offended if one from that place could come into our meeting without any question." You know that the dear brother who read it at your meeting, and who compelled the congregation to adopt it, by not permitting any discussion on it, characterized Bethesda, after hearing Mr. Code's description of it, as "filthy and depraved." With all this knowledge before you, how can you disparage "the separating brother" in the manner you do, because he not only separated from this "filthy and depraved" place, but also, in marked love and care for others, sent them a circular, in which he relates some of its "depravity," and warns them of the danger

of being identified with it? Were it not that this circular is too long to be transcribed here, and that it has long been withdrawn at the request of some who thought it was a hindrance in the path of certain inquirers, I would give a full copy of it, to show how conspicuously it contrasts, in grace and tenderness, and truthfulness, with the many circulars, tracts, pamphlets, spurious quotations, and *base insinuations*, that his enemies have issued against him.

After drawing *your* picture of Bethesda, you state, on your *own* authority again, that its "hesitancy" to do what you tell us they did, "caused the renewal of arbitrary measures against it by the separating brother;" and that, "without endeavouring, in love, to bring about a right judgment in the matter, denounced *as a whole*, the gathering at Bethesda, and all who would hold intercourse with them." What are the arbitrary measures that this brother *renewed* against Bethesda? You do not mention one. The only letter he ever wrote about it was the circular to which I have alluded, and I cannot see any arbitrary measures in it; and even if there were, it could not be a *renewal* of them, inasmuch as he had not *previously* done or said anything against them. And what is your authority for saying that he did not endeavour, in love, to bring about a right judgment? Let an extract from the circular itself refute these reckless assertions:—

"I had nothing whatever to say to the original movement of the brethren who objected at Bristol, and was long wholly ignorant of it; but having stated to Mr. Müller that I should gladly go to Bethesda, I was, on learning the facts, obliged to write and say I could not. This led to a *correspondence*, and at last to *my seeing the*

*brethren, Müller and Craik*, so that all this has been, as far as *I am concerned*, fully before them. There has a great deal taken place and passed very painful and unsatisfactory; but I go on the broad ground of faithfulness to the whole Church of God, and each individual sheep beloved of Christ, that, as far as we are concerned, they may be guarded against what so many of us know to be horribly subversive of His glory, and all moral rectitude in His saints. Now, beloved brethren, I see in Scripture that one effect of faith is to *makes us respect what God respects*. I do not desire, therefore, in the smallest degree, to diminish the respect and value which any may feel personally for the Brothers Craik and Müller, on the grounds of that in which they have honoured God by faith. Let this be maintained as I desire to maintain it, and *have maintained in my intercourse with them*, but I do call upon brethren, by their faithfulness to Christ, and love to the souls of those dear to Him, in faithfulness to set a barrier against this evil. Woe be to them if they love the brethren Müller and Craik, or their own ease, more than the souls of saints dear to Christ; and I plainly urge upon them that, receiving anyone from Bethesda, (unless in any exceptional case of ignorance of what has passed,) is opening the door now to the infection of the abominable evil from which, at so much painful cost, we have been delivered. *It* has been formally and deliberately admitted at Bethesda, under the plea of not investigating it, (itself a principle which refuses to watch against roots of bitterness,) and really palliated. And if this be admitted by receiving persons from Bethesda, those doing so are morally identified with the evil; for the body so acting is corporately responsible for the evil they admit. If brethren think they can admit those who subvert the person and glory of Christ, and principles which have led to so much untruth and dishonesty, it is well they should say so, that those who cannot may know what to do. I only lay the matter before the consciences of brethren, urging it upon them by their fidelity to Christ, and I am clear in my conscience towards them.

“For my own part, I should neither go to Bethesda, in its present state, nor, while in that state, go where persons from it were knowingly admitted. I do not wish to reason on it here, but lay it before brethren, and press it on their fidelity to Christ, and their care of His beloved saints.

“Ever yours, in His grace,

“J. N. D.”



I am not surprised at the manner in which you advocate the cause of Bethesda ; for, if you cannot see the evil of the system at Plymouth, from which Mr. Darby withdrew, neither can you that of Bristol, which unites it with the upholders of the false doctrine respecting the Lord Jesus. If you are content to let the Church be taken from you, you cannot complain if her Lord be taken also. There is such a real union between Christ and the Church, if you lower one, of necessity you must lower the other. Mr. N. saw something of this, although he did not see the Scriptural union between the risen Head and His members. But still he could not get over the fact, that there was some kind of union revealed between Christ and the Church. When, therefore, he reduced her and her hopes to a level with the faithful Jews, it was easy work to represent Christ as nothing better, in his relationships to God, than "Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Are you prepared to endorse principles which bind you to this revolting heresy ? If not, why draw such a picture of Bethesda, and continue in fellowship with her whose leaders you know have adopted tenets for their guide which connect them with it ?

Your remark, of "some falling into error of doctrine quite as dishonouring to God as that which they had denounced," is simply an insinuation, without a shadow of proof. You do not say who they are, nor what the error of doctrine is. You leave your readers to infer, that they are the persons who judged Mr. Newton's false doctrine by separating from its upholders ; for it

could not be expected that you mean yourself, although you seem to "denounce" it in your first paragraph, when you call it "evil teaching." This style is morally bad; for, it shows your readiness to judge "some" without any evidence, and your inclination to excuse others whose evil you admit. In a document that purports to be a call on Christians to unite with you in prayer and humiliation before God such a note should not be raised. It does not harmonize with the texts you quote at the close.

If you were properly "impressed with a sense of the sin and misery of the present condition of things, and conscious of great personal failure," I ask you earnestly but affectionately, could you not have humbled yourself before God, and invited others to join with you, in a much more suitable way than printing and circulating these *inuendoes* against your brethren?

If it pleased God to make you feel that the extraordinary Church position you have assumed connects you with the upholders of this terrible doctrine concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, then, indeed, I have no doubt, you would call on your brethren to unite with you in making true confession how grievously you have mistaken the right path these last twenty years.

If you inquire, how does the rule you have taken as your guide, in relation to other churches, connect you with false teachers? I reply, by receiving Christians into communion who come from places that have avowed and acted on principles which unite them to such teachers, you forge a link to the chain which binds yourself also to them. Of course I do not mean

receiving them if they *renounce* their position under the false teacher, but receiving them when in accredited fellowship with him, allowing interchange of communion, proclaiming to the world that they are one, and that it is immaterial whether a Christian is in fellowship with a heretical or orthodox teacher. By this complicity you identify yourself with the heretical teacher. My authority for saying so is God's Word, in 2 John 10, 11. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, (*i.e.* 'the doctrine of Christ,' ver. 9,) receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." It is not necessary to imbibe the heresy in order to partake of the evil deeds of the heretic; intercourse with him, or saluting him, does so according to this Scripture. Remoteness from the root of the evil does not prevent association with it, when connected by a succession of links; nor does it reduce the enormity of its guilt. My brother, it is this lesson you have to learn.

Unlike your circular, God's Word does not permit nor tolerate "various shades of judgment, as to the exact course to be taken with those who are more or less *associated* with the brother in error." If the "elect lady" to whom the inspired injunction was given had so little respect for God's Word as to refuse compliance, on the plea that the heretic's teachings were too subtle for her to understand, or detect any error in them, would that dulness excuse her act, or avert the Divine sentence that she "partook of his evil deeds?" Would her personal purity in faith exempt her from the con-

sequences of her disobedience to God's command? The supposition is too shocking for the Scriptures to contemplate. They lay down an immutable principle—that association with evil contaminates—that he who has intercourse with a false teacher “*partakes* of his evil deeds.” Faith bows to the decision of God; estimates persons as God estimates them. It sees the word “*partaker*” indelibly and infallibly stamped on him who would dare to infringe on this Divine principle, and acts accordingly.

It is remarkable, and well worthy of our consideration, that it is a woman who is entrusted with the preservation of “the doctrine of Christ” in John's Second Epistle; and it is the class called “little children” that are warned and armed against the Antichrist in his First Epistle, ch. ii. 18-27; thus showing that it is not strength, nor acuteness of mind, that is wanted, but “love that walks after his commandments;” and the “unction from the Holy One,” which gives conscious relationship to “the Father,” and which retains in the soul the knowledge “that no lie is of the truth.” The Lord notices the absence of them in the Jews, and, therefore, solemnly declares to them that they shall receive Antichrist. In John v. 38, He says—“Ye have not His word abiding in you;” and in ver. 42, “Ye have not the love of God in you.” That is, they had not either the qualities which distinguished the “little children,” or the “elect lady;” and the consequence is, “if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.” (ver. 43.) If the word of Christ dwell in us richly,” and if “the love of God be

shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us," the enemy may assail us, but he cannot gain admission, because there is no room for him. But if the house be devoid of these, the more we display our skill in sweeping and garnishing it, the more and better accommodation we give him ; for he finds it not only empty, but prepared for his reception. We are commended to God and to the word of His grace, as our only safeguards from the ravages of the "grievous wolves"—the successors of the Apostles. We ought to know, by happy experience, that being "filled with the Spirit," and having "the Word of God remaining in us," we are proof against every enemy, morally fitted to close the door against him, and qualified to be God's witnesses in this evil world—His lights, dispelling darkness, and shining to His glory.

However indifferently we may regard teachings which deprive the Church of her privileges, God esteems them as corrupting. The churches of Galatia had to learn from Him that the reception of Judaism would displace Christ, and render Him profitless to them, and that its presence in the assembly would contaminate the whole Church. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump," has to be said respecting *it*.

In your second circular you are very explicit in stating your object in calling to prayer. You wish us to ask, "that God would give the grace of repentance to those who may still entertain hard thoughts of their fellow-disciples." This is a very desirable petition if you honestly include yourself and party among those who entertain these thoughts ; for, not to go beyond your

first circular, you have given proof enough that you have them. But if you mean only those who have separated from evil connections, owning the authority of their Lord and Master, your prayer is superfluous, because inapplicable. I am happy to assure you that I do not know one of them who has such thoughts, in your sense of the term. If thoughts of others be hard from being correct, it is not the fault of their possessor, but of those on whose condition his thoughts are rightly formed. Some may deeply feel your position in having let go church truths, and thereby allied yourselves to the deadly heresy ; but this, instead of showing bad feeling, proves the depth of their affection for you. Walking in God's commandments springs from a love that embraces God and His children (1 John v. 2) ; fraternising with evil is the result of an affection that excludes God and His obedient saints. If a man on a rock tries to pull his brother *there*, from a fetid pool into which he has fallen, is he not showing him more love than if he let him alone, or descended and remained with him in it ?

You say you "do not ask prayer that any particular assembly or connection of Christians should be reinstated in its former happy fellowship, or that saints should be visibly united in one church organization ; but that the oneness of the body of Christ should be fully recognized, and that individual members of that body should be united to each other in the perfect bond of charity." This is a strange sentence to succeed the preceding one, in which we are told that "the sin of division ought to be mourned and confessed by all."

How could it be truthfully mourned over, if at the same time prayer is not to be made for its removal by "any particular assembly or connection of Christians being reinstated in its former happy fellowship?" How could any soul uprightly confess division to be sin, and not pray that it may be healed, and that the parties divided may become visibly united? Confession and prayer harmonize when based on truth and produced by the Spirit; but where they do not coalesce, it is a sad evidence of the absence of both truth and the Spirit.

What is the value of praying "that the oneness of the body of Christ should be fully recognized," if each member may continue after its recognition in his own sect or system? Praying, as you suggest, would not be praying "with the understanding." There is no meaning in it. How could unity be manifested if each remain apart?

We are not told to keep the unity of the body of Christ. We are told "there *is* one body and one Spirit." The Holy Ghost is its unity, and it exists independently of man. If all were in a healthy state, the union of the body and "unity of the Spirit" would mean the same thing—the *absolute fact* and *corresponding practice* would be alike. We are told to "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This necessarily keeps us in company with the Spirit of God, on a basis wide enough to embrace all members of Christ, and at the same time narrow enough to exclude all contrary to the presence of the Holy Ghost in the truth. If we were told to keep the unity of the body, we would have to walk with every

member of that body, no matter what his practice or doctrine was. If we place ourselves in an isolated or sectarian position, we put ourselves outside the range of Scripture, for God's Word does not sanction these positions no more than it encourages saints to recognise "the enemies of the body of Christ," without seeking to be "visibly united."

Your circular inculcates Nicodemian unity. Nicodemus might pray to be enabled to recognise the oneness of the body of Christ, but he need not pray that this great truth might have such power over his conscience as to *detach* him from the Jewish Sanhedrim, and *attach* him to the Christian assembly that was manifested on the day of Pentecost! Provided he loved the disciples that were gathered at Jerusalem to bear witness to the risen and glorified Jesus, he might remain in association with his betrayers and murderers! Is this the kind of unity that the Scriptures teach? What sort of consciences do you encourage in Christians? They may learn truths from the Bible, but they are not to be the least influenced by them. They may receive them in their minds as so many notions, but they are not to be subject to them at all. Verily, your latitudinarianism reduces Scripture to a dead letter, instead of upholding it as the living voice of God. He who is taught the "oneness of the body" by the Holy Ghost, will find it a truth that affects his conduct and his associations. The spiritual apprehension of any truth of God, produces fruit in accordance with that truth. Our consciences, if healthy, will keep pace with our light.



I fear your language betrays that you have not yet either apprehended the divine idea of "the body of Christ," or "the unity of the Spirit." If you had, you would neither speak of "rending" the one, nor of attaining to the other. The former is so divinely "knit together and compacted," that neither man nor Satan can rend it; and the latter is not an object for attainment by our devotion, but is what the presence of the Holy Ghost produced, and which we are responsible to *keep* "in the bond of peace."

I have reminded you of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, the maintenance of which distinguished Brethren. I have given some of the doctrines and practices of the Plymouth meeting previous to the separation. I have related the horrible doctrine respecting the Lord Jesus Christ, which was secretly held and taught there before that event, but was not fully discovered nor avowed till afterwards. I have shown Bethesda's connivance at this doctrine, and their alliance with the upholders and propagators of it; and I have glanced at your own relationship to it, and your identification with its supporters. And I now ask you again, does the Word of God warrant any other course than that which "the separating brother" took, if those truths are to be preserved, and if these evils are to be avoided? Is all this iniquity to be tolerated and nurtured in the house of God?

If I have spoken strongly on your assertions, believe me it is not from any bad feeling towards you personally; but, knowing that they are untenable, and calculated to deceive, I felt that I should not allow any to be

ed astray by them who may be ignorant of the facts of this sorrowful history ; and that it was due to the "brother" whom you so unworthily asperse, to give the particulars of the separation. I am quite willing to believe that your purpose was not to mislead, and that you were not perfectly acquainted with the history of the events involved in your statements ; but having published your averments you are responsible for them, and I had to deal with them accordingly.

In order to fulfil the will of God concerning us, we must have our own wills broken, our plans laid aside, our feelings subdued, our wisdom distrusted ; we must be divested of self in every shape and form, and come to Him as little ones in entire dependence ; then we shall prove to our soul's comfort that He can teach us. We may consider the path He marks out for us intricate, and attended with difficulties ; but faith rises to the sense of God's presence, and all obstacles vanish. We may find it hard to part company from many with whom we would fain remain, but let us assure our hearts that God loves them better than we do, that He has the chief claim on us, and that what He prescribes contains nothing that is not for the good of all. Our own fears and unworthiness may press upon us ; but may we receive every word of Scripture, as Moses did God's voice from the burning bush, with unshod feet ; may we listen till God overcome our unbelieving obstinacy, and make us know that His will is our blessing and safety.

It is an unspeakably blessed thing to be subdued by God, to bring Him glory by confessing wherein we may

have erred ; and if we have to begin our journey anew, it is to travel a road in which He can accompany us. If such be the result of this letter in your case, none shall rejoice more than

Yours faithfully in the Lord Jesus,

L. PILSON.

MR. W. J. STOKES.

DUBLIN, *8th April*, 1868.

