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AN ENQUIRY *8*
AS TO THE
SCRIPTURAL POSITION
OF THE
PLYMOUTH BRETHREN,
(SO CALLED.)
A DIALOGUE. *G*
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WITH AN APPENDIX, CONSISTING OF REMARKS UPON THE
FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, VIZ.,—

- 1ST, WAS CHRIST THE BEARER OF HIS PEOPLE'S SINS DURING LIFE?
- 2D, DOES HIS LAW-KEEPING CONSTITUTE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF BELIEVERS?
- 3D, IS "THE LAW" THE CHRISTIAN'S RULE OF LIFE?

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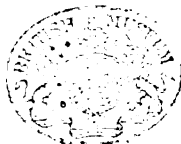
P R E F A C E .

THE following pages are not intended as a defence of those Christians commonly termed "The Plymouth Brethren," but a simple statement of certain truths and principles held by the writer, in common with others, and which he believes is clearly set forth in the Word of God.

The reader is earnestly begged to weigh carefully every statement by that true and infallible standard, the Scriptures of Truth—to reject all that is human—to receive and act out all that is divine.

It only remains to be said, that the thoughts here presented, formed the subject of frequent conversations with friends interested in these truths, hence their dialogue form.

May the Lord own His own truth to the blessing of many.



AN ENQUIRY AS TO THE SCRIPTURAL POSITION
OF THE
PLYMOUTH BRETHREN (SO CALLED).

JAMES. Good evening, Charles, I am very glad to see you. I am told you have joined the "Plymouth Brethren;" and as they are said to hold many erroneous views, I will be pleased to hear your reasons for leaving the church and connecting yourself with these people.

CHARLES. With pleasure, James; but it is quite a mistake to say that I have joined the "Plymouth Brethren," or any church, sect, or party. A church, a denomination, a party, is positively sinful, and is met by the stern rebuke of the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. iii. 1-4. The causing of divisions in the church of God, is a much more serious matter than most people imagine, and those who do so most certainly subject themselves to the discipline of Romans xvi. 17, "now I beseech you, brethren, *mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*"

JAMES. Then what title or name do you take?

CHARLES. Just what the Word of God gives us, viz., Christians (Acts xi. 26; 1 Peter iv. 16): Saints (Eph. iv. 12; 1 Cor. i. 2; Col. i. 2, &c.): Brethren (Acts vi. 3; Rom. xii. 1; 1 Cor. i. 26, &c.): Believers (Acts v. 14; 1 Tim. iv. 12): Disciples (Acts ix. 1, 26; xi. 26—this term is *not* found in the Epistles). *All* the children of God are thus denominated; consequently, *all* ought to reject such distinctive appellations as "Plymouth Brethren," "United Presbyterian," "Wesleyan," "Congregationalist," "Baptist," &c. The adoption or recognition of any distinguishing name or title whatever is therefore repudiated by those assemblies of saints characterized as "Plymouth Brethren."

JAMES. But there are many bodies, differing, of course, as to church order, worship, discipline, and other minor details; and I should think that you ought to join the one nearest the scriptures.

CHARLES. I deeply deplore the existence of so many bodies, but if I am to be guided only by the Word of God, I can join none of them: Why? Because the scriptures don't recognise many bodies, but "one body," "the Body of Christ." (1 Cor. xii. 12-27; Eph. iv. 4; Rom. xii. 4, 5.) The maintenance of discipline, the power for worship, and the working of the gifts, are dependant upon the presence and action of the Spirit in the *body*. The Word affords the most ample directions for the regulation and order of God's assembly. So full, perfect, and minute are those directions, that nothing is left for man's devising—for the exercise of human will. It is God's assembly, governed by divine laws, and indwelt by the Holy Ghost; consequently the Apostle Paul claims the obedience of the spiritual, as to all the detail connected with the church. (1 Cor. xiv. 37.) I would especially commend a careful perusal of the following chapters, which give most valuable instruction about the church—the body of Christ; the gifts—their object and working; worship; the Lord's Supper; and many other things:—1 Cor. xii. and xiv., Rom. xii. and Eph. iv.

JAMES. Then how is one received into the church, or body? Is it by baptism, or the Lord's Supper, or how?

CHARLES. Baptism is most certainly of Divine appointment, so also, the Lord's Supper, but neither is the *door* of entrance into the church. Creeds, confessions, and articles of faith, are *not* terms of membership in the church of God. No; on this point scripture is most clear, "*By one Spirit* are we all baptized into one body. But now God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." (1 Cor. xii. 13, 18.) "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts ii. 47.) Thus every soul that has looked in faith to Jesus has been baptized, not into water, but into "one body" by the Spirit.

The membership of the church of God is as broad as redemption can make it; it embraces every saved soul; it takes in every believer in the world, making no exception, and raising no barriers; Christ believed

in, being the alone door into the church. Now, it is of consequence to see this, because the saints with whom I break bread, every first day of the week, do not claim to be the church of God, or the body of Christ—that would be presumption; but they do claim to be upon the ground of the church; having seen from scripture that “*there is one body,*” they desire, in their own feeble measure, to act upon it, to meet—alas! how feebly they do—our Saviour’s five-times repeated prayer for the oneness of His people, in the 17th of John. Consequently, the Lord has spread a table in their midst, and vouchsafed His presence and Spirit too, so that every believer in any city or town where such an assembly exists, and such a table is spread, has a title as valid, a right as unquestionable, to be there, as those more immediately partaking of the Supper: this is plain from the teaching of 1 Cor. x. 16—21. There was but “one body” in Corinth, although many members, the unity of which was strikingly exemplified by the “one bread,” or loaf. Of course, I need scarcely say, that discipline *may* unhappily come in, and subject a person to exclusion from the table of the Lord; that is quite another thing.

JAMES. I quite admit that the invisible church is composed only of those who have been washed in the blood of Jesus, but surely the “brethren” make infant, or adult baptism, essential to membership in the visible church on earth.

CHARLES. Not so. What I would ask, Is the blessed centre in heaven which has gathered the redeemed together? By what influence or power are they drawn around the throne? Because Christ is in the midst—because Jehovah’s throne is filled by the risen and exalted Saviour; they are there simply, and only, on the ground of the “blood,” while the Christ of God is blessedly owned, as the all-sufficient and only centre,—not alone of the ransomed, but of angels too. Now, surely, the same blessed centre that gathers in the glory is amply sufficient for the union of saints on earth. And it is so; for Rev. vii. 9—17, teaches exactly the same truth as Matthew xviii. 20, “where two or three *are gathered together in my name,* there am I in the midst of them.” Will any one say that the name of Christ is *not* a sufficient centre for saints now? Think you, that the true union of

saints will be effected by means of "Evangelical Alliances," or other kindred associations! Will baptism, or the Lord's Supper, or a strict adherence to the most orthodox creed, serve as a bond to unite saints—to effect their union? No, nothing but the all-powerful and blessed name of Jesus, will do as a centre for the Lord's people.

We meet only in the name of Jesus, and totally disavow any ground of fellowship, other than the blood of Christ. We desire to act upon that scripture, "receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Rom. xv. 7). Consequently, any one whom we have reason to believe has been received by God, is gladly welcomed at the Father's table; and is not such a course according to Acts ii. 44, "all that believed were together?" The union of men out of every nation under heaven, could only be brought about by laying a ground common to *all*—by presenting a centre which would attract and win *all* hearts. Read upon this carefully the following scriptures, "He that gathereth not with *me* scattereth," (Luke xi. 23); "*I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.*" "He died . . . that He might gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John xi. 52). Yes; Christ is God's destined centre, not only for His church on earth, and for saints and angelic intelligences in heaven, but for the whole universe. God "hath purposed . . . that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might *gather together* in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even IN HIM" (Eph. i. 9, 10).

As to any distinction sought to be established between what you term the church "visible" and "invisible," I have only to say, that no such thought occurs in scripture, which invariably gives us the "Head" exalted in heaven, and the "body" on earth. Any one may be satisfied of this, by the most cursory glance of the subject; and I confess that to me it appears extraordinary how any one could read, with anything like care and attention, those early, fresh, and beautiful chapters in Acts, and the Ephesian, and Corinthian epistles, and yet entertain such a singular idea, as that the manifested unity of the "body" is either an impossibility or never meant to be so.

JAMES. Well, certainly, I do see from the scriptures you have

quoted, that the children of God may meet *as such*, without thereby becoming sectarian; but would not such a course throw open the door to all and sundry. A person might say, "I believe in Jesus, I am saved by His blood, I'm a Christian," and yet hold unsound doctrine, say the denial of eternal punishment: now, on your own showing, you could not reject such a person. I should think that something more was needed than merely the confession of the name of Jesus.

CHARLES. I quite see your difficulty, but think it can easily be removed, by your observing that the name, Jesus Christ, comprehends *His Person* as well as *His work*, what He is, as well as what He has done; in proof of this, you have only to turn up, and weigh those scriptures in which the term occurs.

The doctrine you have stated, makes light of sin, hence lessens the value of the sacrifice; it also indirectly attacks the person of our Lord; now this, or any other doctrine of a like nature, dishonours Christ; and as the Holy Ghost gathers saints to the Christ of God—to the Jesus of the scriptures, the true hearted and faithful disciple will have no difficulty in dealing with such things. They will quickly discern the voice of the Good Shepherd. The two great pillars on which Christianity reposes are—1st, the essential dignity and absolute holiness of the person of our Lord; and 2nd, the perfection of His work on the cross. Now unsound doctrine, held or taught as to either of these foundation truths, ought not for a moment to be allowed a place in any scripturally-constituted assembly of saints. One who has taught and written much on this subject, very justly observes, "that an assembly which has not the truth as a condition of its existence, is *not an assembly of God.*" This is a truth which the so-called Plymouth brethren have endorsed to the full; ay, and acted upon it too, which has entailed upon very many of them no small amount of obliquy, reproach, and suffering.

"Holiness becometh thy house for ever," is a principle, true in itself, irrespective of dispensations, times, and circumstances, just because the claims of God are ever the same; the demands of His nature—His holiness can never be abated, or lowered to suit man's

sinful condition. Ample provision has been made for the maintenance of the truth, for the cleanness of the house of God, and for the glory of the "Son." The church, be it remembered, is the pillar and ground (or support) of the truth, and she would of necessity lose her character as the assembly of the living God, were she to tolerate any evil whatever affecting the person of her Lord, for it is on His Person that she is built—is founded, and as she is likewise the "habitation of God through the Spirit," it will at once be admitted, that anything evil introduced, and persisted in, *inconsistent* with *that presence*, must destroy her character as the house, or dwelling of God.

Thus, a true, real confession of the name of Jesus, is not only the centre for the Lord's people, but is also a test and safeguard against all the doctrinal, ecclesiastical, and moral evil which so abound on every hand.

JAMES. I cannot understand you: You are not the body of Christ, and yet like all other denominations, you meet together for worship. Why, you must either be the church, or a part, and if the latter, it follows that you are as much a sect as any of the others.

CHARLES. Not at all; suppose a number of christians in the City of London become solemnly and deeply convinced that all distinctive names and titles are unscriptural; nay more, are positively pernicious, as their existence is a practical denial to the truth that "there is one body;" and that they resolved to meet together, simply *as* believers, in accordance with Acts ii. 44, "all that believed were together," and furthermore, that the object of their coming together, was, as is stated five times, (1 Cor. x., xi.) to show the Lord's death till He come. I say, if a company of christians were thus doing, would they thereby become a sect? what is there either in the *principle* on which they are met, or the *object* for which they are gathered, that could possibly be deemed sectarian? would they not be on ground *common* to all believers? would not such a meeting be the practical carrying out of Matt. xviii. 20, "where two or three are gathered together in *My name*, there am *I* in the midst of them?" Sure am I, that any saint could not object to unite in worship with such a gathered company, and with such a blessed one in the midst.

But all this is the very opposite of denominationalism, which, instead of gathering believers in one to Christ, really puts them where they were previous to redemption being accomplished, viz., isolated,—“scattered abroad” (John xi. 51.) Denominationalism is bad; it invites all like-minded as to doctrine, or to a particular form of church government, or to ministry, &c., to come together. Hence baptists meet as *such*; Wesleyans gather around the name of Wesley; others, again, make some form of church order their centre, some one thing, some another; it matters little *what* divides. The *principle* is the same in all; it is downright schism.

Denominationalism always, and of necessity, narrows the brotherhood of Christ, substitutes *a* truth as the centre of communion, instead of *the* truth, which is Christ. It cannot be too strongly insisted upon, that no company of believers, however pious they may be, or pure their fellowship, can claim to be regarded as a scripturally gathered assembly unless they are assembled only in the name of Jesus Christ—God’s meeting place—for the sinner, for the saint, for the worshipper, for *all*.

Nothing can be plainer; if even the most cursory on-looker looks abroad upon the religious world, as it is called, than that, it is *not* the name of Christ that gathers believers, but the recognition of, or adherence to, certain views, forms, or ceremonies; and if such a principle of meeting be wrong, what will be said of the *object* of their gathering? Am I speaking too strongly when I say that possibly you will not get one out of every ten saved persons, who could give a scriptural, intelligent reply to the question, “for what purpose do you meet on the first day of the week?” Would not the answer almost invariably be, “O, I am going to hear a sermon!” And does not such a reply shew that *the* object for which christians ought to assemble, is not understood. Was it to hear sermon, or to remember Christ in the breaking of bread, for which the Corinthian saints came together? Now don’t mistake me, I don’t undervalue in the very least ministry to the saints; but what is objected to, is the putting of the sermon in place and importance before the Lord’s supper, and shelving the latter into a corner.

Now “Brethren,” as they are called, meet together simply as

christians, and in the name of Jesus; hence, the principle on which they meet is *Divine*, and as their object, when thus gathered, is to remember Christ, according to 1 Cor. x., xi., they are thus supplied with a *Divine* object.

I need scarcely say, that "Brethren" need to be preserved from a spirit of latitudinarism on the one hand, which would accredit as christians those who are not; and on the other, from sectarianism, which would refuse a place at the table of the Lord, to dear saints, because of their non-adherence to the distinguishing tenets of sect or party.

JAMES. Many of these thoughts on the church are new to me. I have been taught to regard the church as consisting of all believers from Adam down to the last day. Pray, tell me something more about "Brethren's" views of the church.

CHARLES. It is comparatively of very little moment what the "Brethren" hold upon this, or any other matter; one line of divine teaching is far more valuable than any amount of mere human instruction. I quite reject the thought of "The Church of God," including all believers from Adam downwards. There is not the least hint of such a thing in the scriptures, but on the contrary, the evidence that the church *did not exist* until the glorification of Christ and the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, is as clear and conclusive to any spiritual, unbiassed reader of the New Testament, as that the sun shines in the heavens, (save of course, what no one denies, in the thoughts and counsels of God from eternity); nay, more was not even *revealed* in old Testament times. Sure am I, that no believer of old had the faintest conception of the church—what could a Jew know of union with Christ? Why there was *then* no Son of Man to unite to.* Talk to a Jew about "one new man," tell him, that the poor, despised Gentile, along with the one who could boast of his descent from Abraham, to whom pertained the promises, the law, the adoption, the glory, the covenants, and the living oracles of God, was now to occupy the same platform, that together they were to be saved *as sinners*,

* Christ could only become Son of Man *in time*. His conception brought out this blessed truth, and was itself the accomplishment of the fact; of course, He was "Son of God" and the "Word" from eternity.

and more than that, that they were to be made "one," to be livingly united to a Christ, who had died, been buried, but whom God had raised from the dead, by His glory and power, to a Christ who had ascended to God's right hand, and who had sent down, consequent upon His glorification, and according to promise, the Holy Ghost, the baptizer of those believing Jews and Gentiles into "one body," and so connecting them with the risen Christ, that He the "Head" and they the members, were henceforth to be named "Christ" 1 Cor. xii. 12. I say, were you to have so spoken to a Jew, before the accomplishment of redemption, and without the clear noon-day light of Paul's epistles, you could only have confused him; he might well have pointed you to the dispensational and legal barriers then existing—to the middle wall of partition between himself, and the uncircumcised Gentile; how could a *union* take place until those barriers were overthrown? barriers too, observe, *divinely* erected. No, the cross must overthrow these hindrances—make peace, and slay the enmity existing heretofore. Judaism could not do this, *it perpetuated* instead of abolishing the isolation of the Jew from all others, and the consequent distance of the Gentile. He might further have directed your attention to the fact that the Scriptures of the Prophets were entirely silent upon such a subject—that while mercy is there spoken of as flowing out to the *ends of the earth*—they nowhere hint upon a union to Christ glorified in heaven—their Messiah was looked for *upon* the earth, not into heaven, *that is* a New Testament truth; and as to the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost *on earth*, that indeed would be a new thing, and quite irreconcilable with David's prayer, "take not thy Holy Spirit from me" Ps. li. 11.

It is a grand mistake to hold that the church had an existence previous to the coming down of the Holy Ghost. The first time it is mentioned is in Matthew xvi. 18, "upon this rock I will build my Church," that is, upon Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Observe, that if the church had existed previous to this, it could not possibly be said, *with truth*, "I will build;" it is neither the *past*, nor *present* tense, that is used, but the *future* "I will build my Church." Now turn to the second of Acts,

and you get the church built, but mark! not until the Holy Ghost had come down from heaven. Christ having laid the ground,—the foundation of this new and hitherto *hidden* truth in His own blood, is received into heaven. The Holy Ghost descends, unites *all* believers into one body, and to the Son of Man, thus exalted to heaven. Christ is thus the “Head,” believers the “body,” and the Holy Ghost the bond of union. Now, this was the work which in “other ages was not made known to the sons of men as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit,” hence, the “Body of Christ” is a New Testament truth, the subject of special revelation from heaven: and it is of all importance to observe that the publication of this divine mystery, was not committed to the Apostle of the circumcision, who, with the ten, received his commission from the risen Lord; but there is this peculiarity in the disclosure of the church to the Gentile apostle, that the latter received his commission direct from the Lord Jesus in *glory*; and apart altogether from the others, “but I certify you brethren that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” Gal. i. 11, 12. If this is not clearly apprehended, much of the glory which God has put upon His church is dimmed. The gospel of grace was committed to the eleven. The gospel of the glory was committed to Paul, hence in reference to the church, and himself as its publisher, he says, “whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me, for you to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints. To whom God would make known what is the *riches of the glory* of this mystery among the Gentiles” Gal. i. 25—27. Paul alone speaks of the gospel of the glory, as it is he alone that reveals the body of Christ which he styles “my gospel.” Thus the distinctiveness and peculiarity of this marvellous truth, from all that ever went before, as from all that possibly can come after, is most marked. It is the completeness of the word of God, as also the “fulness” of Him who filleth all in all.

The expressions, “The Church of God,” and “One body,” each

occur seven times (the perfect number). The former being the complement of the redeemed, Acts xx. 28,—the latter the formation of all saints into “One,” and united to the exalted Son of Man. So close and real is this union that the “Head” in heaven and the “Members” on earth have, as we have seen, but one name, “Christ” 1 Cor. xii. 12. It is quite a mistake to say that union is effected by faith. Faith is nowhere said in scripture to be a uniting power. It is the Holy Spirit who baptizes into “One body,” unites to Christ, is thereby the bond of union in the body, and the power of access for the members unto the Father. But further, there is another and most important aspect of the church. Eph. ii. not only gives us the *materials* out of which this body is formed, and the *work* on which it is grounded, and the *power* for effecting it, but God having wrought a work worthy of Himself, can now in *grace* to us, and *holiness* to Himself, make this body HIS DWELLING, not a tabernacle merely, but His habitation, His house. In it He dwells. The church is His abode.

Most marvellous truth! Adam in innocence had not such a blessing. God could *walk* in Eden in the “cool of the day,” but He could not *dwell*. Sin, ruin, and redemption must come in, before God could find a home in this world. He could *dwell* with redeemed Israel, in fact this was the purpose for which they were taken out of Egypt, “I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God, and they shall know that I am the Lord their God that brought them out of the land of Egypt, *that I may dwell among them*” Exodus xxix. 45, 46.

Has God no temple now? clearly He has. The aggregate of believers in the world,—the Church of the living God, composed only of sinners saved by blood, constitutes the dwelling of God in this age, “know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you, which temple ye are” 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. “In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” Eph. ii. 22. The importance of this scripture cannot be over-estimated, since it is a deduction from the great truth that there is “one body,” while, of course, it greatly enhances our responsi-

bilities. Blessing and responsibility are commensurate—ever go hand in hand.

What a privilege! God Himself in our midst. Surely His presence with us is the brightest testimony that could be borne as to the value and worth of His beloved Son's work, and also of the absolute perfection of the believer in Him.

"The house of God" is always viewed in scripture as the *responsible* body on earth, hence it does not necessarily follow that every stone in the building is a "living stone," although, of course, it ought to be so. On the contrary, every member of the body is *really* united to Christ, the difference being, that the latter is the Spirit's work, whereas the former is man's work. The foundation of the building has been divinely laid, which is Jesus Christ; it can never again be said, "but let every man *take heed* how he buildeth thereupon. Now if *any man* build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble," &c., 1 Cor. iii. 10—17. Alas! alas! these solemn words of warning—the "take heed" of the Holy Ghost was quickly forgotten. Ere Paul, the wise Master-builder, had gone to his rest, he had to mourn over the sad picture, so vividly depicted in his second epistle to Timothy. In that epistle the solemn and *to us* humbling truth is too apparent to need comment. The church *hath* ceased to be the pillar and ground of the truth. The church has shown herself unworthy to be recognised as the House of God, hence the aptness of the title "A Great House." Wood, hay, and stubble (evil persons) have been introduced into the building, *bad* doctrine has been allowed a place, hence God disowns it. Can He abide where wicked persons are allowed?—where corrupting doctrine is permitted to rear its head?—where His Spirit is practically put out? No, 'twere impossible. The glory is departed from the house. Ichabod might be written on her walls. Christendom, is now by virtue of profession, "the great house."* But surely it behoves all who regard the claims of God in His church, to recognise the truth that God has

* That which once stood forth as the testimony of God in the world—the grand and only exponent of the *truth*—The fair witness of God—the revelation of His mind—and the reflection of His Christ, has become most thoroughly corrupt. She has lost her standing—*Divine* in her *origin* and *heavenly* in her character—she has now grown debased and wicked, alas! alas! how is she fallen.

not, and cannot, free His children from giving effect to His purposes concerning it! If christians would only believe this; if they would but credit that God still requires His church, to be the witness to, and maintainer of the truth in the world—to be Christ's Epistle—to be God's habitation—to give the supreme place to His Spirit—to seek the unity of the assembly, and gather together simply as christians, they would then find God, as good as His word, "God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son," to this fellowship all are called, and it will not do to plead the ruin of the church, and the apostacy of these days. *God is faithful*, is surely a sufficient answer to all objections. *All* are called to the fellowship of God's Son, but *all* have not obeyed; alas! how few have done so. The fellowship of every sect, and denomination in Christendom, will be found too narrow for God. God's Son, is God's fellowship, for God's people.

JAMES. If these thoughts are correct, and I confess I am somewhat startled and surprised at their novelty, they do present the church in an altogether new aspect, giving her a very unique place in the revelation of God, and, I suppose, greatly enhancing the already heavy and solemn responsibilities of christians. I quite admit, too, that the church as she *now is* presents, perhaps, more of *contrast* than *likeness* to what she *was* as portrayed in the Acts and Epistles.

CHARLES. I am thankful for your admission. The church has indeed sadly degenerated. Her decline in these years past has been most rapid, and marked by an unusual amount of activity by the powers of darkness; while, alas! instead of a corresponding degree of godly zeal and earnest contending for the faith—meeting, counteracting, and successfully resisting the flood of evil which is pouring in on every side—we are met by an awful amount of the most practical indifference. The foundation of the common faith of christians is openly, and in the most unblushing manner, assailed on every hand. Scarce a so-called Christian country but can now boast of some daring high-handed blaspheming adversary of our Lord Jesus Christ. Books, pamphlets, and tracts, are being rapidly advertised and scattered broad-cast over these lands, in which every foundation,

truth, and doctrine of Christianity is denied; and that Church which boasts of its beautiful and simple liturgy—in which the Word of God is so much and regularly read, and which has within its pale many of the most learned, pious, and godly persons to be found anywhere—a church patronised by royalty and protected by the power and law of the State—whose valuable contributions to the cause of Biblical research and erudition cannot be surpassed, has, notwithstanding all, shown herself unable to purge from her midst certain high ecclesiastical dignitaries and professors in her seats of learning, who, casting off all fear of God, hesitate not plainly and distinctly to deny the inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures—the divinity of the Son of God—the personality of the Holy Ghost—the total fall of man—redemption by blood; and what, perhaps, is about as bad, or nearly so, is, that the great bulk of Christians are either totally indifferent to the evil, or actually applaud the efforts of those champions of damnable heresies. Alas! it is true, too true, that almost every principle of truth and loyalty to Christ is trampled upon. It is a sad, but too self-evident fact, patent to the least reflecting mind, that the church bears but the remotest likeness to what she was. Her early and modern history present an awful contrast.

JAMES. If these things be so, then please tell me how the efforts of “Brethren” have succeeded in the formation of a church, with her constitution, ministry, and worship, after the New Testament model.

CHARLES. You are all wrong in supposing that “Brethren” have formed a new church, for, as I have already said, such a thing is unscriptural. All such attempts *must* result in failure, for there is one body, besides being opposed to Eph. iv. 3, “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” We are *not to make* the unity; it has been made by the Spirit; but to “endeavour to *keep* the unity of the Spirit.” We have no *power* to make good the unity of God’s children on earth; *that* needed divine power for its accomplishment; and even supposing that you had the power, that of itself would not be sufficient; for what of the authority to do so? The truth is, we lack both.

JAMES. You *Plymouth Brethren* greatly surprise me. You tell me

that the church has failed—that the churches of the day are almost altogether unlike those of the New Testament—that the church has lost her original standing—that ecclesiastical pretensions, heresies, and the like, have so thoroughly corrupted and marred her likeness to what she was at the beginning, that you and others have separated yourselves from it; and yet I find you arguing against the formation of a church *after the primitive model!*

CHARLES. Well, I have already said that you lack power and authority to form a church, and in the absence of these indispensable requisites what am I to do? If I find myself in the circumstances you have described, what ought to be my course? Is it to set about the restoration of things? If so, then it shows that I am not humbled enough about all this evil; in fact, while it owns the ruin on the one hand, it virtually denies it on the other; for I ought to be mourning over, and deploring this as *my sin*, and as the palpable proof of my utter weakness; instead of which, if I am talking about forming a new church, &c., I, in effect, say, “no, I am not weak—I have not so sadly failed, for I purpose setting about an apostolic task—the restoration of the present, or formation of a new church, with its primitive ministries, gifts, offices, constitution, discipline,” &c. In addition to all this, you would need *another* and *different* foundation; for Paul *has* said, “*I have* laid the foundation;” thus, ere another church could be formed, you would need *a repetition of Christ’s work* as its foundation; but that is impossible.

JAMES. I will think over what you say about the formation of the church as in apostolic times. I admit that it was set up under apostolic authority and power, and it may be, as you say, an unscriptural thing to form it anew, in the absence of apostles; but what then am I to do? If the Word of God forbids me attempting the formation of a new church, how does it meet me in the circumstances I am placed in? for I do most deeply deplore the many evils in the church. Should I not then remain where I am, and try and reform things somewhat?

CHARLES. No; the evils are too numerous—too gigantic—too widespread for human interference. It is not now, as at Corinth, “a little

leaven" leavening the lump, and which may be purged out of the "House of God." The evil overbalances the good. If your conscience has been awakened, and your mind in anywise enlightened as to these grave matters, then there need be no difficulty as to what you should do. Your course is clear; for the Word of God looks forward to this state of things, anticipates the difficulties of the faithful, and affords the most ample directions for any one troubled as to his course amidst the many abounding doctrinal and ecclesiastical evils which may beset his path. If you turn to the second epistle of Paul to Timothy ii. 19-21, you will find the *present ruined* state of the church most faithfully depicted; and mark, what is of immense moment in this inquiry, directions suitable for all times, and for all the ever-varying circumstances of the church of God. To all who have a judgment about the ruin of the church, the direct and positive application of this scripture is most undoubted, which, from its importance, I quote in full. "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure having this seal. The Lord knoweth them that are his. And *let every one that nameth the name of Christ DEPART FROM INIQUITY.* But in a great house (viz., Christendom) 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. **IF A MAN, THEREFORE, PURGE HIMSELF FROM THESE** (*i.e.* vessels to dishonour) he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: **BUT FOLLOW RIGHTEOUSNESS, FAITH, CHARITY, PEACE, WITH THEM THAT CALL ON THE LORD OUT OF A PURE HEART.**" This scripture is a very gracious provision for these perilous times.

"Purge yourself from these," and "depart from iniquity," are the divine commands; but I warn you solemnly not to stop half-way. These commands are not more absolute or imperative than the other, "follow righteousness, . . . with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Many I have known have acted on the *purging* of verse 21, but, alas! have come short in the *following* of verse 22. The whole of this epistle contains much valued and needed instruction for the servant of God in the "perilous times" of these last days.

Now, those who have acted out 2 Tim. ii. 19-21, can most certainly count upon the presence of Jesus in their gathered midst, for He has declared, that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, *there am I in the midst of them.*" (Matt. xviii. 20.) Precious word! Jesus in the midst! Thus the faithful two or three have blessing secured them to the end of time. They need no external aids to worship: organs, altars, ritualism, in any shape or form, can have no charms to the soul that has been divinely taught the truth of Matt. xviii. 20; the presence of Jesus being more than all the pomp, display, and glory of man.

JAMES. You have said "there *is* one body," and that however widespread the apostacy may be, the existence of the church or body is secured, how comes this about?

CHARLES. Just because the constituent elements of the church remain, and will, until the morning of her translation to heaven. These are, first, a real confession of the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. 'Twas *here* that Christ was rejected, cast out, and slain, so in this *the place* of His deep humiliation, the Holy Ghost is making known His name, establishing and maintaining that blessed name in the souls of saved sinners. (Rom. i. 5.) Second, The Word of God, our guide and directory as to all the detail of our pathway here below. Third, The Spirit of God the alone power for worship, ministry, and communion, the distributor of gifts, and the power for their efficient working. Thus provision has been made for the continuance of the church, and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

JAMES. I cheerfully own the high importance of an honest and hearty confession of the name of Jesus Christ, by all who desire church fellowship; in not requiring this more thoroughly, I think the church has sadly failed. I should also, as I suppose every Christian would, insist upon being governed only by the Word of God; but I confess that I cannot understand you as to the Spirit being "the distributor of gifts, and the power for their efficient working." If I am rightly informed, *the Plymouth Brethren* hold some very singular and Quaker-like ideas about the Holy Spirit.

CHARLES. Before explaining what I believe the Word of God teaches as to the functions of the Spirit of God in the assembly, may I ask if you have ever attended meetings of the Society of Friends (I cannot call them Quakers as they disown the name), and any of the meetings for worship by those you term *Plymouth Brethren*? And if so, was there no difference? was not the Spirit's presence owned and practically felt, and His sovereign rule and guidance acknowledged in the one, while disowned in the other?

JAMES. I have on various occasions attended the meetings of the Society of Friends, and am free to confess that I was painfully impressed with the conviction that the whole services were lifeless, and, I should think, deadening in their effects upon the soul. The very fact that the Lord's supper was wanting, confirmed me in the thought that the presence of the Holy Spirit was *but* a theory. I can say nothing of the meetings for worship of the *Plymouth Brethren*, not having been at any of them, but would be obliged by a statement of their views upon the Spirit's place in the church.

CHARLES. As I have already more than once observed, it little matters what "brethren" hold upon this or any other subject. The question alone for you and I is simply, what does the Word of God teach as to the doctrine of the Spirit's presence and action in the assembly of God? "Brethren" may and do err, just because they are fallible. The Word of God cannot; it is perfect; it is divine, and it endureth for ever.

I suppose it won't be denied that the Holy Ghost, sent by the Son, consequent upon His ascension to God's right hand, and by the Father according to promise, really came down from heaven at Pentecost, and *dwelt and acted in the Church*. I suppose it will also be granted that He dwells in believers *individually*. But what I desire to bring before you, is the all-important truth of the dispensation, that the Holy Ghost,—the one which has effected the union of saints to a risen and glorified Christ, and which has *thus* given the Church or body that other character as the house or temple of God, by *dwelling in it here on earth*—acts by, and through the members of the body for the common good. I don't mean His action in indi-

viduals *as such*, and for individual benefit, which is a truth in which, happily, most all are agreed; but His action in the assembly gathered in the name of Christ. He dwells in the church, although He acts in the members, and some not perceiving this, have strangely enough supposed that the Spirit dwells only in ministers and gifted persons, because He acts in them; but this is a total mistake. Without wishing to offend any one, I hold such a thought as the simple and natural result of a clerical ministry. A class of men have arisen, according to Paul's prediction, Acts xx. 29, 30, who style themselves *the ministers of Jesus Christ*, who claim for themselves the exclusive right to minister in the church, and towards the world, thus absorbing *all* the gifts of the "body." Hence the very singular idea that the Holy Ghost *dwells* and *acts* only through them. "Brethren," as they are called, on the contrary, maintain the *sovereignty* of the Holy Ghost in the distribution of gift. This is clear from 1 Cor. xii. The *Lordship* of Jesus over the *individual*, and His *Headship* over the "body" are both shown to be practically maintained by the Holy Ghost. I can neither own Jesus as my *Lord*, nor as *Head* of His body, but by the Holy Ghost. Then as to gift, "He divides to *every man* severally **AS HE WILL.**" "Brethren" know of no gift imparting power, but the Holy Ghost. Can anything be more explicit in terms—"He (the Holy Spirit) dividing to every man severally *as He will.*" Every form of human appointment, any and every mode of accrediting certain persons as "ministers," can have no value or weight whatever with any simple devout reader of this chapter, if the persons so recognised *have not* been gifted by the Spirit. This is essential, absolutely essential, to the exercise of any ministry whatever. Now, contrast this with the usual mode of making "clergymen" or "ministers," as they are termed. Before a Christian man can exercise his gift, say that of "teaching" in the church, he *must* go through a prescribed course of tuition extending over a certain number of years; he *must* learn *divinity* from the lips of his professor; with but few exceptions, he *need not* be a converted man at all; he *must* deliver certain trial discourses, which if deemed suitable, he is *then ordained*. Now in this chapter, I find just two essentials to a

minister of the Lord Jesus Christ: first, that he have a gift from the Spirit; secondly, that the gift be *worked* by the Spirit. Again, I repeat, that gift is not imparted by education, ordination, or by any power short of the Holy Spirit. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to *every man* to profit withal." Every individual member of the body of Christ is here embraced; some, of course, may be very feeble and weak, so much so, that one could scarce recognise the gift or gifts they possess. Still, they are as needful for the completeness and growth of the "body" as the more highly gifted. They have their place, and I ought to profit by their ministry. Thus, instead of a one man, or clerical ministry in the church of God, I find every saved soul set by God in the body—gifted by the Holy Spirit, and responsible for the due exercise of that gift; the end and object of it being "that all may learn and all may be comforted." Let any candid, unbiassed Christian take up, and ponder the 12th and 14th of 1st Corinthians, and the 12th of Romans, and then ask himself the question, where do I find these chapters acted upon? Let him step into any of the so-called evangelical churches, and what would he find? Liberty for *all* to prophesy, one by one (1 Cor. xiv. 31)? liberty for one to give a word of wisdom, another a word of comfort, another a psalm, as the Spirit might lead? Would he breathe the atmosphere of liberty? Would he find the "body" edifying itself in love? Would he find the fit and proper action of each part of the body—the eye, the ear, the foot, &c.? Would he find room and place for the feeblest of the flock to minister; nay, would even the highly gifted, if not ordained, be allowed a ministering place in the assembly? Let those questions be answered—answered truly and conscientiously by any honest soul, and I am certain that the verdict would be, that man's arrangements rule the church of God. Speak to Christian men about the Spirit's guidance in the church, and it is called mysticism, quakerism, and such like. Speak to them about the necessity of dependence upon Him, as to worship and ministry in the church, and it will be called disorder. What a scene of ruin, indeed! It is not *alone* the church of Rome that claims a human head for God's assembly—which hinders the operation of the Spirit-given gifts

by the setting up of man to rule and preside. It is not alone the priests and functionaries of that corrupt system who speak of the redeemed of the Lord as "*my flock*" who, by their position founded on *human will*, displace the Spirit of God—deny Him the right to work by whom *He will*—deny Him as the power by which acceptable worship can be rendered to God and to the Lamb, as well as ministry amongst the saints. There was a time when He had His place in the assembly, when men recognised, owned, and felt the church to be God's dwelling place—when it was no mere theory, but a solemn fact, as witnessed by the judgment of death which fell upon Ananias and Sapphira, who had *lied to the Holy Ghost*. The truth was owned, too, by the abundant and rich ministry amongst the saints. The tokens of His presence were most manifest. Blessing was enjoyed, because *then*, the saints came together to meet God—to worship Him—to adore the Lamb—to "break bread" in memory of Christ. In *such* worship meetings there might, or might not, be ministry exercised, *that* not being the object for which they were met. Blessed and divine, as to its source and power, as ministry undoubtedly is, worship is much more so. In the former, I speak from God to man; in the latter, we approach God. Of course, it generally happens that some gifted person or other, ministers when gathered for the "breaking of bread." Any who have found their way into such meetings amongst the "brethren" will have observed this no doubt. Still, it is an exceedingly important point to be clear as to the object of meeting on the first day of the week, which is for the distinct and definite object of remembering Christ in "the breaking of bread." "Brethren" have many meetings, and in fact, are glad of all opportunities possible for preaching, teaching, exhorting, &c.

JAMES. But surely the "Plymouth Brethren" admit the necessity of an ordained or consecrated person to preside at the Lord's Supper?

CHARLES. "Brethren" do most certainly disown *a president* in the assembly, be he consecrated or not. Jesus is His church's head. I know of no president but He, while I own the Holy Ghost as the power, by which to worship, teach, exhort, minister at the table, or any kind of service whatever. The Word of God does not, I think,

warrant one more than another to break the "bread," and distribute to the saints. Of course, godly behaviour would teach a "novice" and young persons not to lead *habitually* in the assembly, particularly at the breaking of bread. Still, scripture has it so, that any brother may break bread, and hand round to the gathered saints the bread and wine. This, I think, is pretty evident from the *omission* of apostles, elders, pastors, and deacons, from the 11th of 1st Corinthians. There the Lord's supper is referred to five times, and the abuses which had gathered around it were to be met—by the elders or pastors?—no, but by a proper observance of the precious institution *by the assembly*. Here we find a gathering possessing the largest number of gifted persons, and yet they are passed by—they have no place *as ministers* when the Table of the Lord is in question. Any one may see this for themselves by perusing carefully the 16th and 17th verses of the 10th chapter, as also from the 23rd verse of the 11th chapter to the end. I have known many congregations of godly people suffer immensely, robbing themselves of much blessing from their lack of faith, in not carrying out the principles of God's Word in respect to the Supper. It is not an unfrequent circumstance for an assembly of Christian people to rise from the table, and leave the bread unbroken and the wine untouched, simply because an ordained person was not there to preside.

JAMES. How often do you observe the Sacrament of the Supper? We do so monthly, and find it much more convenient than a weekly observance, as some do.

CHARLES. "The Sacrament of the Supper!" It is not so termed in scripture, and it generally follows that a departure from scriptural phraseology is accompanied by a departure from sound scriptural doctrine and practice. I am surprised, James, to hear you speaking of a monthly observance of the ordinance as more convenient than a weekly one. *Convenience* ought to have no place in the things of God.

JAMES. I do not think that Scripture tells how often the Supper is to be partaken of.

CHARLES. I think it does. If you neglect a weekly observance of

the Lord's Supper, you keep out of view His death, which gives the first day of the week all its value and importance. It is quite true that the Lord's resurrection from the dead is a truth we cannot too highly prize; but, then, *this* is the very day in which He, the once slain Saviour, would have us remember Him in death; and surely that heart must be cold indeed, that fails to meet with fond, longing, yearning love, the weekly return of the feast which commemorates His dying love. At its first institution, our Lord said to His gathered few, "this do ye, as oft as ye do it, in remembrance of me." Think you an affectionate heart would be inclined to question the frequency of the remembrance of the suffering Christ? Would it not be more apt to chide delay? Let love answer the question. Nothing, I think, can be more easily demonstrated, than that the church met on the first day of the week to celebrate her redemption through the blood of the Lamb—to remember her dying Lord's last command, "do this in remembrance of me"—to accept the tokens of that love which knows no measure, no limit, no bound. In Acts ii. 42, we read, "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and the fellowship (or contribution), and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." This is the first mention made of the supper after its institution by our Lord, and immediately succeeding the commencement of the Spirit's ministry in the church. Of course, it is not stated when, or how often, they gathered together to attend to those things, but that when assembled, these things were attended to. Other scriptures tell us when, and how often they assembled for their observance. Acts xx. 7:—"and upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the morrow." This scripture is most conclusive on the point. Paul had gone to Troas on the Monday previous. Now, why did he tarry there so long, and yet in such haste to go up to Jerusalem? (verse 16.) Clearly, that he might meet with the church on her stated authorised day of meeting, which was "the Lord's day," or "first day of the week." And mark, too, the special characteristic object of assembling was to break bread, not to hear Paul preach, although, when gathered for the definite object

of calling to remembrance the slain Christ, he discoursed to them until the break of day.

We have another proof from 1 Cor. xi., in which the coming together of the church to break bread, is again and again referred to. True, it is not said that their "coming together" was on the Lord's day; but that would be quite unnecessary, as we learn from Acts ii. 42, that "the breaking of bread" and contribution to the poor saints were amongst the things "steadfastly continued in." The former, as we have already seen from the 20th of Acts, was observed on the first day of the week; the latter also on the same day, see 1 Cor. xvi. 1-2. Again, in Rev. i. 10, we have the expression, "The Lord's day." I know some have sought to identify this only once-named expression with "the day of the Lord;" but scholars tell us quite another thing. The Greek for "the Lord's day" cannot possibly be rendered "the day of the Lord," but is the same word justly translated "the Lord's supper;" besides which it would be difficult to see the force or propriety of the language, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," if it is made to mean the coming day of wrath; while any one may see the moral beauty of coupling the day of resurrection, and the Spirit as the power to enable John to see the scenes of glory and beauty which passed before him. What day more fitting than the resurrection day, in which more of the Spirit's energy is put forth, and presence enjoyed, for the full setting forth of the personal and official glories of him who triumphed over all, by His cross, and now fills the throne of God! More might be said regarding the day, but I think a careful perusal of the scriptures quoted will satisfy any one that the scriptural time for breaking bread, is on the first day of the week; consequently, that quarterly, half yearly, or monthly communions, as they are termed, are unauthorised by the Word of God.

JAMES. Then, do I understand you to say, that the *Plymouth Brethren* meet together every first day of the week for "the breaking of bread," and that when they are met, there may, or may not be the exercise of gift in their midst, and also, that the supper might be worthily partaken of in the absence of leading persons in the assembly.

CHARLES. Brethren do thus meet.

JAMES. May I ask if you baptize infants or adults? and if it is done by an ordained minister?

CHARLES. I am not aware that scripture says a single word about the baptism of infants. Certainly, no example of *such* baptism can be found in the word; and as to baptism taking the place of circumcision, it is a simple fallacy. Where is the scripture that says so? Let it be produced. If we want to know the *meaning* of baptism, we get it in the epistles; if the *persons*, we get it in the Acts. Baptism and the Lord's Supper both present *death*, but in different aspects. In the former I am viewed as *dead with Christ*—"baptized into his death," consequently "dead unto sin"—an exceedingly important truth, and one but little understood in these days. In the latter there is no association with Christ—it is Christ *dead for me*, dead for *my sins*. If I look at the "bread and wine," I behold the memorials of *that perfect sacrifice* which has once and for ever put away all my sins; if I look at the waters of baptism, I see the fit expression of my death *with Christ* unto sin. Baptism is in *figure* what the grave of Christ is in *fact*, the depository of my sins—my evil nature—the old man, over which no trumpet sound of resurrection shall ever be heard. Would that it were so practically! If baptism be but rightly understood, there will be no difficulty either as to the *subjects* or *mode* of its administration.

Baptism is an *individual* matter, and in no sense a church ordinance. Hence, however desirable and proper that an assembly sanction and have fellowship with a believer seeking baptism, it does not necessarily follow that the church endorse the act. There may not always be that happy unanimity of mind and judgment upon the matter which is at all times so desirable; consequently, a believer, wishing to be baptized, may if he please, request any brother to perform the service. Philip and the eunuch is a case in point. The narrative does not inform us that Philip was either a pastor or elder. He was a deacon, but certainly baptizing was no part of a deacon's work. What we have brought before us, is a simple yet withal, beautiful story of a conversion, and its results. The Ethiopian eunuch, seated in his chariot on his return from Jerusalem, is reading the 53rd

of Isaiah. Philip, directed by the Spirit of God, joins him; preaches Jesus; opened the scriptures, and opened the darkened understanding of his eager listener. The truth was received; believed in; and at once he claims baptism from the hands of Philip. Could anything be simpler. Philip's authority to baptize most certainly rested upon the Spirit's commission, see Acts viii. 29, 39,—not upon any form of human appointment, or even by the laying on of the apostle's hands, as in Acts vi. 5, 6, which was for an entirely different object.

JAMES. But, of course, "Brethren" don't reject, in some shape or other, an ordained ministry. I think scripture is very clear and full as to this, so much so, that I am surprised any one should doubt it. It may not be needful, however, to have an ordained clergyman, or other official person, to baptize and administer the Lord's Supper, although I have hitherto regarded it as absolutely requisite to the due administration of these ordinances.

CHARLES. Well James, leaving "Brethren" alone for the present, I doubt, if scripture supports, in the very least degree, the modern and now almost universal practices of appointing to the office of the ministry, as it is called, in the Church of God.

JAMES. I am surprised to hear you say so. Allow me to adduce the following passages, which, I think, incontestibly establishes the truth of an ordained ministry. Acts vi. 1-8; xiii. 1-3; 1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6, &c.

CHARLES. There is no profit in merely quoting scripture, unless it has a positive bearing to the subject on hand. Now, while I fully admit that the passages you have named claims our devout attention and reverence, simply because they are divine, still, I fail to see their application to the modern system of making ministers. Strange, too, that those are the very texts usually relied upon by Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and others, for their many forms of ordination, and to suit their various objects.

Now, the passage in Acts, 6th chapter, has not the slightest reference to the ordination of pastors, or elders. The seven chosen men (verse 3) are nowhere called "deacons," although usually under-

stood to be such; much less are pastors, or elders in the scene. There could, of course, be no possible objection to the use of the word "deacon," as applicable to these "seven," were it scripturally understood. Now-a-days, however, it is generally supposed to mean an official person;* not so in scripture. Deacon (*diakonos*) occurs upwards of thirty times in the New Testament, and is correctly translated "servant," and "minister," except in two instances, viz., Phil. i. 1, and 1 Tim. iii. 8, 12, where the Greek word is simply put into English letters. It is also applied to either sex engaged in any kind of spiritual, or secular service. Owing to the rapid increase in the numbers of the disciples, a feeling of jealousy—not, perhaps, without good ground, seems to have arisen on the part of the Grecians, or Hellenistic Jews, because their widows were neglected in the daily service. How beautifully, and with what divine wisdom is this exigency of the church met! The disciples are called together by the apostles, who had had committed to them by the risen Jesus (Matt. xxviii. 18-20) their commission, and had been endued with power by the Holy Ghost for their high and holy work—"the ministry of the Word."† The disciples are directed to look out from among themselves "seven men of honest report whom *we may appoint* over this business," or necessity.

JAMES. Well it does not, I admit, when looked into, afford ground for the ordination of ministers; still, there is ordination in the passage, and that, too, by the church. I think you will concede that point.

CHARLES. I can't do that, for the "appointment" *was* by the apostles,—“Whom we may appoint over this business” puts it beyond dispute. The action of the assembly was very different,

* The seven men chosen by the assembly at Jerusalem had undoubtedly a charge committed to them, hence they were the deacons or servants of the church; but what is objected to, is the naming them Deacons, to the exclusion of their fellow-servants, and thus conferring officialism upon a few. “As every man hath received the gift, *even so* let him minister the same as a good steward of the grace of God,” gives ample scope and liberty to ALL.

† It may be worth while to note, that the difficulties of the assembly in no wise diminished the love, or lessened the care of the apostles. How dear to their hearts were those Jerusalem saints! Their very trials and difficulties drew forth that forcible expression of devotion, “We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.” Blessed resolve! May the Lord help us to catch the spirit of generous love which so animated them!

which was to “choose”—to “look out.” The two things are quite distinct, and ought not to be confounded—the one done by the disciples, the other by the apostles. Now, any scripturally constituted assembly, placed in like circumstances, would, I am sure, gladly follow the example of the assembly of God at Jerusalem, in the nomination of men well reported of, and full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom, to take charge of the liberality of the saints, and its distribution to the needy. An assembly has an undoubted authority from this scripture to choose such men ; but further they must not, dare not go. The apostles only could appoint by the laying on of hands ; and for any bishop, priest, presbytery, session, or church, to take their ground—to attempt doing their work—is either the practical denial that the apostolic work has been accomplished—that the office did not cease with their death, and, consequently, the absurd claim of apostolic succession is set up—or else, in the admitted absence of divine authority, the exercise of human will is pleaded for, from which may God deliver us ! The 6th of Acts has nothing whatever to say about an ordained ministry.

JAMES. I think I cannot but own the validity of your objections for the ordination of clergymen from this scripture ; but what of the 13th of Acts ?

CHARLES. Nearly the same objections apply. It won't do to foist in what is not in the text ; neither will it do to force scripture to speak on a subject on which it is entirely silent. Neither pastors, elders, nor deacons, are in question here, although I think we have a precedent which “brethren,” at least, often follow, in recommending to the grace of God those called, and sent forth by the Holy Ghost to missionary labour. In such a case, the laying on of hands is a simple and thoroughly scriptural sign, expressing identification and fellowship with the sent ones. But that is quite another thing from the ordination of ministers. Saul and Barnabas were not ordained elders ; *that* was not the work for which the Holy Ghost sent them forth. What, then, was their ministry ?—to preach fully the Gospel of God to the Gentiles—to open wide the door for their reception, which had been but partially so, by the entrance of Cornelius and others

—to confirm the souls of the disciples—to form local assemblies and appoint them with elders. They were, for the time being, the apostles of the Holy Ghost, not commissioned and sent forth by the church, but by the Holy Spirit. He it is who said, while the prophets and teachers fasted and prayed, and evidently deeply interested in the gracious work of Gentile conversion to God,—“*Separate me* Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto *I have called them.*” (Verse 1.) What, then, was the meaning of these ministering prophets and teachers laying their hands on Barnabas and Saul, if not for the purpose of expressing their oneness and fellowship with them in their work, and recommending them to the grace of God? That this was really the case is evident from the 26-28th verses of the 14th chapter. It is well to notice, too, that both had been fellow-labourers at Antioch for at least twelve months previous to their solemn setting apart for this particular service, besides labouring for years in various parts with much acceptance and blessing, which, of course, shows that the service to which they had been called was a *special one*, which when they had fulfilled, they returned to their old sphere of labour.

Now all this has not the remotest connection with the work of the ordained elder; still, as I have said, one could have no possible objection to the church, or ministering servants in it, as at Antioch, laying their hands on any really called by the Holy Ghost for evangelistic labour. Would that it were in all cases more simply acted upon!

JAMES. Well, I never looked narrowly into the passage, but took it for granted that it proved pretty clearly the ordination of ministers. There is, however, another Scripture which I gave you in 1 Tim. iv. 14, and 2 Tim. i. 6. I understand these passages prove conclusively the ordination of clergymen. At least, it is generally regarded as a complete answer to the position of “brethren,” as being without a regularly ordained ministry.

CHARLES. Permit me to ask you if Timothy was an elder, I mean having a local charge, such as elders had?

JAMES. Of course not.

CHARLES. Then any argument from the laying on of hands on Timothy falls to the ground. If, for instance, Timothy had been ordained for the deaconship, how could that be used as a valid reason for the ordination of elders? The two things are quite distinct, not that I deny the ordination of elders and deacons. I believe hands were laid on both, but by whom? By the church? Never. Not a single instance can be adduced of a congregation ordaining elders or deacons. It was always done by direct apostolic appointment, or by a delegate duly commissioned. Can any lay claim to ordaining power *now*? If so, on what rests their authority? Had Titus been called upon for the production of his authority, for his work in Crete, he could at once have appealed to the apostolic charge,—“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.” (Titus i. 5.) How very emphatic and personal is all this; and will any one pretend to exercise a power which none but an apostle, directly led by the Spirit of God, could do, or one authorized by him, as was Titus? I refuse to recognise the existence of an ordaining power,* by whomsoever the right is claimed. Saul, Barnabas, and Titus, were the only authorized persons to ordain elders.† The two former, as we have seen, were sent forth *directly* and *immediately* by the Holy Ghost. *He* became thus the source and power of their ministry. They were His apostles, accomplishing His work, which when fulfilled, they returned again to Antioch. Titus, I have already observed, could show an undeniable and unquestionable authority, the terms of which are singularly clear and precise. Ought I, then, to bow to any authority other than apostolic? Surely not.

But I have already said Timothy was not an elder, and however much Presbyterians may rely upon the laying on of hands in this case, it cannot possibly be made to serve their purpose; and really it

* Unless the terms of appointment can be shown, which *must* be neither vague nor unsatisfactory. If it bears an apostolic imprint, well; if not, then it behoves all the faithful to reject all else as mere assumption.

† It is a generally accepted fact that Timothy ordained by the laying on of hands. *It may be so*, although not expressly stated. Does 1 Tim. v. 21, 22, embrace the ordination of elders? We know that the laying on of hands was used for various purposes.

is astonishing how such a scripture should be supposed to sanction the ordination of ministers. It has really nothing to do with *office*. Timothy was *not*, by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, installed into the *office* of the ministry, as it is commonly termed; but a positive *bona fide* gift was conferred by the laying on of Paul's hands (2 Tim. i. 6),—"stir up the gift of God, which is in thee *by the putting on of my hands*." This puts the matter beyond dispute. Others, as we know, were associated with Paul in the act of the laying on of hands; but surely *that* can present no difficulty to any simple reader of the Bible. The laying on of hands is an act fitly expressing fellowship. Its meaning is made abundantly plain from the numerous instances of its occurrence in the Old and New Testaments, especially in the former. It is an exceedingly common thing even in our own day for, say a dying father, to lay his hands upon the heads of his children, and by this appropriate act recommend them to the God of all grace. Sure am I that it was *not* the hands of the Presbytery or Elderhood which conferred "the gift" upon Timothy. It was given by the laying on of Paul's hands. Others had fellowship in the act, which they appropriately signified by the laying on of hands. Now, if any one presume to act upon this scripture, they *must* do so consistently. Two things characterised this proceeding, *viz.*, *prophecy* and *power*. Timothy was the subject of prophecy, for it was in accordance with certain prophecies that this gift was imparted; and power in conferring it rested only with the Apostle Paul. I suppose that no intelligent Christian but would utterly reject the thought of any individual *now* being the subject of direct prophecy, and would treat as mere assumption the claim of apostolic power in the impartation of gift. A certain party in the National Church, and the Church of Rome, do arrogate such power, but with these I have no controversy. They will sooner or later find out that the assumption of power without the reality is but a farce—a solemn mockery. Such men may, for a while, blind the eyes of their followers, but their love of *power* will yet prove the source of their weakness, and let them beware! for a day of humbling to the proud and mighty is decreed—is nigh at hand.

JAMES. I begin to see that I have been on a wrong track altogether. I'm afraid there is not warrant in scripture for ordination now, seeing that we lack apostles to ordain, and that the authority to do so is not vested in any one; for I frankly confess to you, Charles, that no one *can* produce such an authorization to ordain as Titus could, and that therefore no provision has been made for the continuance of ordained elders, and yet they are as needful now as then—nay, I should think much more so.

CHARLES. Don't you think that God is the best judge of that, that if He had considered an ordained elderhood "as needful now as then," that he would have provided for their perpetual continuance? I confess that I cannot but admire the perfection of Divine intelligence, first in giving elders, and then, having served their purpose, withdrawing them. Many of those local assemblies needed much guidance and care; hence, grave, experienced, aged men—men of wisdom, and possessing local knowledge of the circumstances and condition of the saints—were installed as care-takers and rulers. They not only carried into the assembly all the moral weight which piety and character justly entitled them to, but were, in addition, vested with an *official* authority, which the dignity of their office claimed from all. Now, the circumstances in which many local churches were placed were exceptional and peculiar. Rescued from idolatry and gross superstition,—taken from every species of vice,—Jew and Gentile together, each finding the greatest difficulty in laying aside that which specially characterised him—slow to learn that the middle wall of partition had been broken down by the cross, and that henceforth, there was to be neither Jew nor Gentile, circumcision nor uncircumcision, bond nor free, but were all to exhibit visibly their oneness in Christ. I say, all this would call for mutual forbearance and much long-suffering; hence the need of wise men possessing those qualifications of character, and endowed with spiritual wisdom, which would fit them for exercising that godly care and rule absolutely requisite for the maintenance of godly order in their midst. Those congregations which were appointed with elders were either in their infancy, or, as I have already said, their circumstances were

exceptional. Thus they required fathers to guide, direct, and advise, and who, besides the weight which age, experience, and other qualifications gave them, had official authority, which, of course, *must* have exercised a considerable influence in quelling the unruly and disobedient, and in enabling to keep all in due godly subjection. "Obey them that have the rule over you" is the word to the saints, an obedience, however, which can only be claimed by those who "watch for your souls as they that must give account." Have we need for ordained elders now? I think not. They, equally with apostles, have served the end for which they were designed, consequently have passed away. Let it be borne in mind that we have the fulness of Divine revelation—the Word of God complete—a revelation which is amply sufficient for every possible exigency of the church—sufficient for every difficulty—enough for her at all times and under all circumstances—a revelation, moreover, containing a faithful record of the mistakes, failures, and difficulties of the early church, with the needed admonitions, warnings, and corrective measures to meet their condition. May we not, then, profit by their mistakes? may we not apply the same remedies to meet the same, or a similar condition of things? Do we need the weight of officialism to force from us the honour and obedience justly due to those who bear the "rule over you?" There is another consideration which, I doubt not, accounts, or at least partly so, for the discontinuance of ordained elders; that is, the love of power and authority more or less common to us all. In nothing is this love of power so much displayed as in ecclesiastical matters. I venture to say, that the whole ecclesiastical superstructure of Christendom is reared upon this deep-grained principle of our fallen nature. The dispute, "who among us will be the greatest?" commenced with the disciples in the days of our Lord, was carried on by the disciples and others in apostolic times, and is not yet terminated, nor likely to be soon. It is the same principle which is at work from the Pope of Rome down to the least objectionable mode or form of ordination. Hence, I think, from the extreme danger, and likelihood of gift being hindered and controlled in its exercise by persons possessing official authority, that an

ordained eldership has been discontinued.* Be that as it may, the fact remains that the Spirit-given gifts are not allowed a place in the Church of God, that official rule and arrangement forbid their exercise. Would not any one who used his unquestionable privilege of, say, exhorting the saints, be treated as an intruder upon the minister's rights? But what forbids it? *Ordination*.† Pardon me the remark, ordination I regard as one, if not the greatest stumbling-block to the growth of the Body of Christ, and perhaps one of the direst curses which afflict Christendom. Its attendant evils are legion:

JAMES. I have often wished that more liberty were allowed to the pious and gifted members of our churches. I am quite sure many of them could minister to the edification and profit of saints. Perhaps the "minister's position" does prove a source of hinderance to the development of gift and building up of the saints.

CHARLES. It must be so, since the source and power of clerical ministry is *ordination*, and the channel through which it flows, *the minister*.

JAMES. Do you distinguish between pastors and elders? I know some do; but, for my own part, I have always regarded them as one and the same.

CHARLES. The *source* of all true ministry and gift is the risen Lord Jesus. Ephesians iv. 7-16 makes this very plain,—“Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the *gift of Christ*. When he ascended up on high *he gave gifts* unto men. And *he gave* some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers,” &c. Christ on high “gave;” should I, then, be found attempting to *improve* the gifts of Christ by imposing ordination ere I'll permit their exercise? or, should I not rather gratefully and thankfully accept the gifts of my risen Lord? Has He, indeed, *so* cared for and remembered His saints down here,

* The command to ordain elders only embraced the district of Asia Minor and other places included in the evangelistic tour of Barnabas and Saul, and in the Island of Crete by Titus. These were the only places, so far as recorded, to whom elders were given. The ordination of elders was not so extensively done as is generally supposed.

† I may here remark that “ordination” is invariably used in these pages, not in its correct scriptural signification, but as generally understood, viz., appointing to an official ministry by the laying on of hands.

that He has not only sent down from the glory the Holy Ghost according to promise, but has also loaded us with gifts, which, if received, owned, and accredited *as His*, will, without fail, effect the end for which they were designed, viz., "the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ, *till* we all come in the unity of the Spirit into a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Now these gifts are not given to a section of the body, for the edifying of a local assembly, but are given to the Body of Christ *as such*. They are gifts to the church—the means by which the saints were to be perfected, the ministry duly ordered, and the body edified. These objects could never be attained by the appointment of elders, because they had no charge beyond their localised sphere of labour. If an ordained elder from Jerusalem went to reside at Corinth, he would need a re-appointment ere he could be recognised as one there; but although we have not elders now, because lacking the competent authority to ordain, still there are men in the church who ought to have an intelligent obedience rendered them—who ought to be esteemed highly—men evidently gifted for guiding in seasons of difficulty, for advising in matters of discipline—men who can warn, rebuke, and correct with all authority—not the authority of office, but with the authority of those who rule with all diligence, and yet with the grace which is equal to, and according to the measure of, the gift of Christ. It is never said in scripture that elders were given to "the body," although, of course, the gift of rule, the special qualification of an elder (1 Tim. v. 17), may be, and was used irrespective of ordination altogether. Still, they are not in the list recorded in Ephesians iv., just because it was an office specially created to meet the necessities of certain assemblies. This, however, did not hinder the elder freely using whatever gifts he had, in, or apart from, the assembly he was more immediately connected with. His ordination had nothing whatever to do with whatever gifts he was endowed. He was the Lord's servant wherever he might, for the time being, find himself; responsible equally with every other member of the body for the due exercise of every talent given him.

A pastor was the Lord's gift to His Church; hence, wherever he moved, or however long he might be located in any given place, it mattered not. He needs no ordination. All depends upon whether or not he is called to the service. If "set in the body" by God, if called by Jesus Christ, and if strengthened and otherwise fitted by the Holy Ghost, what more is needed? what more would you have? Is the gift of a real minister of Jesus Christ not worth having? Surely I should count it one of my highest joys to own every true, devoted servant. "Feed my sheep," "Feed my lambs," is all the commission a pastor requires. It is ample, embracing every "sheep," every "lamb" of the flock. The authority is enough, excluding man and every form of human appointment whatever. Is it not a terrible thing to insist upon ordination before I will be permitted to reclaim a wanderer from the fold, tend a sick one, and, generally to pasture the sheep of Christ? Christian ministry owns no human authority, recognises no forms, or appointments, disowns every kind of human sanction; derives all her authority solely from Christ on high. Charge or office, on the contrary, is dependent upon apostolic authority. Hence we have the former still continued to the church, because Christ is still the sovereign dispenser of gifts; we have not the latter because apostles are no more. There are other marked distinctions between "gift" and "office,"* a right understanding of which will prove exceedingly helpful to an intelligent apprehension of ministry.

JAMES. But would all this not lead to disorder? I should think you could scarcely get on in the absence of an ordained well-educated minister to preside at the supper, and lead the worship. Scripture, you know, says, "let all things be done decently, and in order." Then, I should fear that incapable persons might occasionally rise up to teach, and exhort, in your meetings. Still, I cannot gainsay your statements and arguments, as they do seem to me to be founded on the scriptures.

CHARLES. If "brethren" habitually cherish the truth in their souls that Christ is in their gathered midst; if the Spirit's presence,

* Much valuable instruction and real profit, in this and kindred subjects, may be learned from a careful perusal of an eloquently written work lately published, entitled "Six Lectures on the Church of God." London: Broom, Paternoster Row.

too, and guidance be the firm unalterable conviction of their hearts, they need not, and do not fear, "disorder." They have learnt in some feeble measure the meaning of 2nd Cor. iii. 17, "where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty,"—not the liberty of "the flesh," or the "will of man," but the liberty of children in the presence of their Father; the liberty of worshippers in the presence of the Lamb; the liberty of sons in the exercise of love, seeking a brother's building up; a sinner's salvation; a wanderer's reclamation to his home. Call you that "disorder?" Can you speak of such a word in any assembly in which the moral sense of *His* presence is not blunted? I grant you the flesh is capable of anything, it would even seek to "glory in the presence of the Lord;" and most assuredly will disorders, and heresies of all kinds triumph in any assembly, in which the holiness becoming God's house, and what is due to the Spirit, is ignored or slighted. But what is the remedy for this?—an ordained, well-educated ministry—a president who would assert his authority and *compel* obedience? Never! You have only to take a look into the Corinthian assembly to find such ground untenable. What a scene of riot and disorder there presents itself! Drunkenness and feasting at the very table of the Lord—contentions about their ministers—ranging themselves under various leaders—incest winked at—appearing against each other before the civil magistrate—the resurrection of the dead called in question, and other evils, and yet this assembly was blest with gifts as none other was, besides being under direct apostolic surveillance and care. True, they had *not* ordained elders, but that fact confirms the statement, that ordained elders were not the means by which the assembly was to right itself, neither could all the gifts, and ministers they so abundantly possessed, effect a reformation in godly behaviour and sound doctrine. The assembly must purge itself, not the ministers of the assembly, as people will have it now-a-days, but the assembly, *as such*, is called upon to correct the abuses which had gathered around the supper, to purge out the "leaven of malice and wickedness." The assembly is held to be thoroughly competent to do this; "awake to righteousness and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God, I speak this to *your shame*," were the words of

holy admonition and warning addressed to her. She profited by the stern apostolic rebuke, as we know well by the 2nd epistle. I have referred to this more particularly than I would, as "brethren" are constantly charged with permitting all sorts of disorderly practices in their midst.

You say, "Let all things be done decently, and in order." I love that scripture, and would ever court its strict application to the meetings of the Lord's people; but, by all means, let us have the Spirit's "order" of things in God's assembly. There will be neither lack of "decency" nor "order" if we but "*know how* to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the *living God*." Composure of mind, quietness of spirit, decorum in manner, well-ordered speech, and solemnity, will not be wanting by the soul that has to do with the *living God* in His own house.

"Incapable persons" may rise up to teach and exhort in gatherings of believers dependant upon the present action of the spirit of God; but if the assembly is faithful, and the "more excellent way" (the way of love, 1st Cor. 13) be walked in, the brother will quickly discover his mistake. Such cases are, I rejoice to say, somewhat rare. Still, I would much rather listen occasionally to an incompetent person, who would, of course, cease his ministry *at once* if not acceptable to the saints, than to be necessitated to "sit under" the continuous services of an "incapable" but ordained well-educated minister. You again speak of a president at the Lord's table. It is really dreadful to talk of a president at the feast which commemorates Him in death. Calvary is surely no place for the assertion of authority. I must cease to regard *that* as the Lord's table or supper, where our joint communion in His broken body and shed blood is a forgotten truth. I meet apostles, elders, and deacons, around the table of my dead, now risen, and glorified Lord. But do I meet them there in their ministerial capacity? No; I see nought but a company of sinners washed in the blood of the Lamb, feasting together, rejoicing together, and if an apostle's joy be deeper, and his song more jubilant than another, it is not because he fills the highest ministering place in the body of Christ, but because he of sinners "chief" has obtained mercy; still

the song is one, common to all—"Unto Him that *loveth us*,* and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us Kings and Priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory, and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Again, I would say, let there be the fullest, freest, liberty for the Spirit of God to act by whom *He will*; look to Him to guide, and order all in the assembly. Let the saints weigh well their responsibility to receive all divinely-given gifts by whomsoever ministered. A man is none the less Christ's gift to His saints although in a wrong position. Some of our sweetest, liveliest hymns are the production of popish monks and others of a like character. I trust, James, I have answered your enquiries as to the church and ministry from the Word of God. "Brethren," as they sectionally denominated, profess to meet on ground common to all saints; and why, let me ask, are we not all meeting together? Christ's name, I repeat, is enough to draw all saints in the world together. How blessed then were all names disowned—every system swept away, and Christians be content to gather only to the person of Christ, and seek to earn practically, the title—"The assembly of the living God"—seek to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called; for this—"God is faithful by whom *ye were* called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

G.

* See Greek, which gives the *love* in the present tense; the *washing* in the past.

APPENDIX.

1. WAS CHRIST A SIN-BEARER DURING LIFE?
 2. DOES CHRIST'S OBEDIENCE TO "THE LAW" CONSTITUTE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS IN WHICH BELIEVERS STAND BEFORE GOD?
 3. IS "THE LAW" THE CHRISTIAN'S RULE OF LIFE?
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It may be known to many that a controversy has been going on for some time past, on some of the most important and vital questions which could possibly engage the minds and hearts of Christians—questions more deeply affecting the ground of our peace and justification before God, and the Church's foundation, than most people will care to allow. We have no sympathy whatever with those who speak of, and practically regard those exceedingly grave subjects, as of "little moment;" perhaps some have been turned aside from the godly consideration of those truths by the acrimonious spirit displayed in some quarters. This is to be regretted, the more so, as truth will never be promoted by "hard sayings" and "bitter speeches." Still, it is a matter of devout thankfulness to God, that attention has been called to the consideration of some of the most momentous questions of scripture. The sooner every false thought of Christ—every cloud which would obscure the least ray of His glory—is dispelled, the better. Were no higher objects gained by all that has been written and said of late, than the happy freedom from ecclesiastical domination, the severing of religious fetters, the cutting-up of deep-rooted prejudices, and happy liberty from early educational bias, which has so cramped the spiritual energies of numbers of God's children, we would have abundant reason for gratitude. Men have now begun in real earnest to bestir themselves, to test and try the teachings and writings of their religious teachers by the Word of God. Who would not rejoice at such results?

The three questions heading this article most deeply pervade the religious literature of the day. They are regarded as cardinal truths of Christianity, and justly so. They occupy a large share in pulpit ministrations. Those who negative the questions are regarded, and spoken of, as "unsound in the faith"—semi-Socinians, tinged with Unitarianism and the like—are pronounced heretics, and people to be avoided; on the other hand, their affirmation bears the stamp of "orthodoxy" and sound theology; hence a reason why so many fear to take a step out of the well-trod, beaten track of orthodoxy. Those who have taken pains to go through with anything like care, the valuable tracts which have issued from the masterly pens of some who have taken a prominent part in defending the truth once committed to the saints, will bear us out in the remark, that scripture has been asked, again and again, for the generally received ideas that, Christ was bearing sin during life; 2ndly, that His law-fulfilling constitutes the righteousness—the ground of Divine acceptance; and 3rdly, that the law is the Christian's rule of life—but hitherto without success. Arguments in abundance—some acute, and many sophistical, have been adduced, but very little scripture referred to. Surely the cause that cannot, or will not furnish scripture, is, to say the least of it, exceedingly doubtful.

We are quite aware that large numbers of godly, gifted, and otherwise able men, maintain most tenaciously the doctrines we combat; children are taught them in the Sunday School; the youth of our land are generally familiar with them, and of course never think of questioning their truthfulness; and the church-going part of the population learn them from the lips of their ministers. The result of all this amount of false teaching is sorrowful to contemplate. One grows up in the full belief of these doctrines, is converted, rejoices in the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ, is happy for a while, but after a time begins to feel the trammels of early associations, and previous teaching, which, instead of keeping his eye fixed on Jesus, bearing His sins on His own body on *the tree*, and his mind calmly resting on the finished work of the Son of God, of which the Holy Ghost is a witness to us, takes him *off* the ground of a sinner's confidence before God, and so suffers in consequence. The life of Christ, precious as it is, will not, cannot give peace of conscience. I am not justified by His

life, but by "His blood;" I have not forgiveness of sins, founded upon His holy, blameless, spotless life, but upon "His blood." He has not made peace by the service of His devoted life, but "through the blood of the cross." If I am uncertain as to the ground on which God justifies the ungodly, or have failed in rightly apprehending the "grace" in which I stand, by *adding* the life, and law-keeping of Jesus to his sacrifice on the tree, I must suffer. There is no help for it. As surely as the divine order of things is displaced, consequent loss of blessing will be the result. This is too truly verified in the lack of settled peace, and in the uncertainty of thousands as to whether they are saved or no. It is a divine axiom that a perfect sacrifice *must perfect for ever* the believer.

Another fruitful source of evil to Christians, is making the law a rule of life and conduct. This has been more disastrous to the *liberty* and *usefulness* of God's children than tongue can tell. This doctrine makes every Christian married to the law—an *adulteress*. There is no escaping the conclusion. The 7th of Romans presents two husbands, Christ and the law, and teaches, that if I am married to Christ, *I am dead to the law*, else I am an *adulteress*. If I am wedded to two husbands, what am I? Let that chapter answer.

We hope that no one will suppose that they are charged with *willfully* corrupting the truth of God, or that they *knowingly* reflect upon the holiness, and glory of the person of our Lord by the adoption of these doctrines. We believe their tendency is *bad*; that souls suffer immensely; that they do plunge saints into a sea of perplexity and uneasiness, as to questions which the Word of God has already settled for their soul's peace and progress in the truth. Still, we believe all is done, *in most cases*, in real ignorance.

These doctrines, we believe, cannot be traced to a higher source than to the times of the Puritans and Reformers, many of whom were men of undoubted power and vigorous piety, but *not* safe as teachers, owing to their almost total want of knowledge of what is correctly termed "dispensational truth."

We will now furnish our readers with various short extracts from some of the tracts already referred to, commending the pamphlets themselves to the prayerful consideration of all interested.

1. *Was Christ bearing our sins during life, or did He bear them only on the tree?*

"The true force of 1st Peter ii. 24, has been called in question by those who seek not only to make Christ's life, but His sufferings, during the time of His active service, penal. The thought that all the sufferings of that blessed One have infinite value, and that they were all for us, every Christian heart would close in with adoringly. . . . I do not hesitate to say, that those who speak of Christ's living righteousness to us for righteousness, and hold the sufferings of His active service to have been penal and vicarious, have in *no case a full, clear, and Scriptural gospel*. . . . I am sure many who, from the teaching they have had, hold it, are as far as my own heart could desire from the wish to weaken the truth of atonement and the value of Christ's blood-shedding, without which there is no remission. . . . I believe that His moral perfectness, completed in death, was available to me as that in which He was personally agreeable to God, and a Lamb without spot and blemish. . . . No one denies that Christ suffered, during His life, sufferings which found their perfection in His death, besides the wrath-bearing character of it; for He was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. But the question is, "Was there sin-bearing during His active service, or *was He kept up as the Lamb to bear sin?*" . . . Hebrews vii. 27, "Who needeth not daily, as those High Priests, to offer up sacrifices, for this He did once when He offered up Himself." Now, here it is perfectly certain that it is has nothing to do with the *victim bearing sins up to the altar*, but . . . the High Priest offering it on the altar when it was a victim; so, also, we have distinct proof that it is no vicarious life, for He did it *once* when he offered up Himself, and it was for sins. . . . *A living victim bringing up sins to the altar is a thought foreign to, and contrary to scripture.*" ("The Righteousness of God." D. Broom. Paternoster Row, London.) "In result, this doctrine of an expiatory sin-bearing life is built on no scripture ground. It sets aside the declaration that without shedding of blood there is no remission. It denies the offering up of Christ by Himself when a man, to be a sacrifice, a most vital truth, *for He is it all His life*. It perverts, in the most shocking way, such passages as, "With his stripes we are healed," and casts at once both Christ's sufferings under Divine wrath, as the wages of sin, and His living sympathies into the shade by confounding them together, making death and blood shedding unessential to the first, and turning the latter into sufferings for sin under God's hand. We are told *a whole individual life is our expiation*. Mark that reader! Life an expiation. I ask if such a statement be not in opposition to the universal testimony of the word of God. ("The Sufferings of Christ." G. Morrish, Paternoster Row, London.)

* The italics, in most cases, are mine.

2. Does Christ's Law Keeping constitute the Ground of our Acceptance by God?

"He (Christ) did display God's character when alive. He was it. But that was addressed to man, not a satisfaction to God for man. . . . I am, as even Luther expresses it, Christ before God. If righteousness come by law, then Christ is dead in vain. But if Christ has fulfilled it *for me* it does come by law, and Christ is dead in vain. Law applies to flesh, is weak through it; sets up, if it could, the righteousness of the first man. But I am *not* in the flesh at all. I am in Christ. . . . I ask . . . for *one text* which teaches that the fulfilling of the law is the way of having righteousness. I cite these: By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. If righteousness come by law, Christ is dead in vain. The righteousness of God without law is manifested. I know they tell me this is our keeping it. No; *it is stated absolutely*. But if it be, let them produce a text which teaches us that Christ's keeping the law was a different way, and that that is the way of righteousness. *A passage which refers to the value of his keeping the law for righteousness FOR US.*" ("Further Remarks upon Righteousness and Law, &c." W. H. Broom, London.)

3. Is the Law the Christian's Rule of Life?

". . . Then, as to the believer's rule of life, the apostle does not say to me to live is the law, but "*To me to live is Christ.*" (Phil. i. 21.) Christ is our rule, our model, our touchstone, our all. The continual inquiry of the Christian should not be is this or that according to law? but is it *like Christ*. The law could never teach me to live, bless, and pray for my enemies; but this is exactly what the gospel teaches me to do. . . . We are predestinated to be conformed, not to the law, but to the image of God's Son. We are to be like Him."—"A Scriptural Inquiry into the true nature of the Sabbath, the Law, and the Christian Ministry." C. H. M. G. Morrish, Paternoster Row, London.) . . . I am quite aware that it will be said, and is said, that it is not just to confound seeking justice and life by the law with making it a rule of life; but the whole theory on which this distinction is based is a delusion. Who has authorised us to take the law for one thing, and leave it for another, when God has presented it specifically for one? The apostle's statement is, that if we have to do with the law *it takes us*. It puts us under a curse, ministers death to us, and condemnation. It does not ask us how we take it. . . . What is the rule of life? I answer, Christ. Christ is our life, rule, pattern, example, and everything. The Spirit our living quickener, and power to follow Him. The word of God, that in which we find Him revealed, and His mind unfolded in detail. But, while all Scripture, rightly divided, is our light as the inspired word of God, at least to those who have an unction from the Holy One, Christ and the Spirit are set before us as pattern, life and guide, in contrast with law, and Christ is exclusively everything. . . . It is not a rule written down, but a living exhibition of One, who being my life is to be reproduced by me, always bearing about in my body the dying of the Lord Jesus, *that the life of Jesus may be manifested in my mortal body.*" ("Law." W. H. Broom, Paternoster Row, London.)

"An Inquiry into the relative Value of the Life, Death, and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, by a student of scripture," will be found helpful upon those subjects. G. Morrish, Paternoster Row, London.

Also, "The Sabbath: or is the Law Dead, or am I?" Scott & Allan, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow.



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