



THE
CHURCH OF GOD
ON EARTH,
AND
THE RECEPTION
OF ONE ANOTHER.

A Scriptural Enquiry;
Review of the "R.T.H." Position;
AND
Modern "Church of God" Theories.

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ONE PENNY.

"THE CHURCH OF GOD ON EARTH"

AND THE

RECEPTION OF "ONE ANOTHER."

I HAVE received a pamphlet entitled "The Gathering and Receiving of the Children of God: a Review," by R. T. H., and since the questions raised are of practical importance to the Lord's people, I would attempt to examine some of them in the light of Scripture, and in dependence on Him.

It may be well to state briefly the main points at issue. First, the tract under review maintains that the Word of God recognises a company of people on earth, *not the Body of Christ*; that has, in virtue of its peculiar fidelity to God and His Word, beyond other Christians, exclusive right to the title "The Church of God," and that believers outside the company are outside the Church of God on earth. Next, as growing out of this, that those who thus form "The Church of God" on earth must not receive any, even although they may evidently be believers who are still in an unscriptural ecclesiastical connection, unless they sever absolutely all such connections.

As illustrating the first of these contentions I quote :

"We have no such custom, neither the Churches of God.' 1 Corinthians xi. 16 conclusively shows that Paul applied the term 'Church of God' to a Church in a locality, and could use the plural, as he contemplated more than one. And what was it that made them Churches of God? Did they cease to be such in the moment that some in self-will left and started a sect? Their being 'of God' resulted from God and His Word having their place, quite irrespective of the absence of some Christians through self-will. If all in Corinth had openly left the Assembly except six, those six would have been the Church of God at Corinth."

And again, speaking on 1 Corinthians v. :

"The wicked man must be 'put away.' But from what? Only from that into which he had been received by the Assembly. They had not received him into 'the one Body,' and they did not put him away from it. When outside their fellowship, he was still a member of the Body. Into this the Spirit had baptised him, not the saints at Corinth" (page 12).

I do not quote this with any idea of a wholesale denial of it as false. That there is the mystic Body of Christ, composed alone of all true believers of all time, not even yet complete; and that also on earth there is "the Assembly of God," it would surely be folly to deny; but what are the deductions taught from these admitted facts? Practically this: There is amid all the confusion of the day to be found somewhere a company of believers, or a circle of such companies, *so pre-emin-*

ently distinguished from other believers by faithfulness to God and His Word as to be alone entitled to call itself or be called "The Church of God"; their being "of God" resulting from "God and His Word having their place." Further, we are compelled to assume, since there clearly can be but one such company or circle of companies, that the writer himself has found it, and is in it. But is he allowed undisputed possession of that divinely-given name "The Church of God"? Not at all. A very Babel of protests arises on all sides from rival claimants, each fully admitting the premise that there is on earth "The Church of God," each making for itself exactly the same exclusive claim!

Is this not true? And is it not enough to drive into utter bewilderment the poor, simple sheep of Christ? Can one wonder that so many say, "What is the use of leaving the denomination with which I am connected when I see distinctly a far more energetic spirit of strife (which Scripture makes the very soul of sectarianism, 1 Cor. iii. 3), in that which you would have me join? It is quite easy quietly to beg the whole question by saying that others, governed by "self-will," leave "the Assembly":* but this very readiness to accuse does not commend to me as being exclusively "of God" any position that necessitates it.

Yet, on the other hand, is there *no* truth as to the Church left? Does human failure nullify one jot or one tittle of the Divine Word? May we not, then, enquire, in confessed dependence on the God of all grace, what Scripture teaches, going on the same admitted premise that there is still on earth "The Church of God" (1 Cor. x. 32)?

Where is this, then, to be found? From one clear Scripture (1 Cor. xii.) I find the Church likened to the human body, and thus the interdependence of the whole insisted upon. Moreover, beyond question it is the Church *on earth* of which the Spirit speaks. There are no "weak" or "needy" ones in heaven, none needing the ministry of "pastor," "teacher," or "gifts of healing" there, blessed be God: this is all on earth.

Yet is it (and mark it well, for this is overlooked absolutely, or denied virtually, by this pamphlet) *the Body of Christ*? "Ye are the Body of Christ, and members in particular" (verse 27). He contemplates them as having been baptised by the One Spirit into the One Body; *they take that place*, and he assumes it to be real, and addresses them as such, pressing the consequent responsibilities of the place assumed.

* R. T. H. criticises J. R. C. sharply for not using the same word for Church uniformly; he himself has to change here, for to say, "if all but six left the Church," those left would still *be* the Church," would have too clearly exposed the way the question was begged.

But since our aim is truth, not controversy, let us look at this candidly from our brother's standpoint. He would ask, "Was it not the *Assembly of God* in Corinth that was addressed in the Epistles?" "Certainly," we reply.

"Was the sinful man in that *Assembly* then?" "Yes."

"Was he still in the *Assembly of God* in Corinth after he had been put away from among them?"

"No, he was outside this *Assembly* in Corinth then."

"But was he outside the *Spiritual Body of Christ*? Does not the Second Epistle show that he was still a member of this?"

"Yes, his repentance manifested this."

"Then do you not see that here was a man put *outside the Church or Assembly of God on earth* who was yet *inside the Body of Christ*? Is it not as clear as possible, therefore, that there must necessarily be a distinction between the *Body of Christ* and the *Church of God on earth*?"

It would be folly to deny that there is force in this, nor will it do to point again to 1 Corinthians xii. 27 and repeat that the *Church on earth is the Body of Christ*. This would only leave the matter as an unsolved difficulty, while the solution is possible and available.

It is one of the clearest principles of Scripture that people are always addressed on the ground that they themselves take, and the consequent responsibilities of the position thus assumed are pressed upon them. For instance, if any one assumes to be one of the Lord's servants, he is at once held to the responsibility of that position, whether he be true or false, and is called "a servant," although, strictly speaking, he may not be a true servant or serve the Lord at all. (See Matthew xxv. 14 to 30, &c.) So, too, the five foolish "*virgins*" are only such on account of the position or profession assumed, not because of any heart-separation from the world or attachment to Christ. For could He say to such, "I know you not?"

So as to the Temple at Jerusalem, a figure of the Church as the House of God. It had, in the Lord's time, no glory, no shekinah; the Lord was not dwelling in it. It had been built by Herod, a wicked Edomite king; yet did the Lord take it up on the *ground claimed for it*, called it "*My Father's House*," although it had become a den of thieves, and not till the final definite rejection of the people did he say, "*Your house is left to you desolate.*"

Note, too, with what careful exactness the Spirit of God uses words in harmony with this. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where the sin of the professing Christian is the question, he is not recognised as necessarily a brother at all. But "if any man that is *called* a brother" and "put away . . .

that wicked person" (v. 11). This involves responsibility apart from the profession being true or false; but when the repentance speaks for him in the Second Epistle, the exhortation is to confirm love to him as a real brother.

Exactly in the same way the Church is the witness for God on earth. He Himself sent it forth at first, in all the purity and love that bespoke its Author, with every member clearly evidencing that divine life which was nowhere to be seen outside its limits. The Lord's Supper (1 Cor. x. 17) is the sign of its unity. Now, all who take the place of being, and are accepted as, members of this living organism—the Church—are taken upon the ground of their profession. The company of such in any place is addressed as being the Body of Christ, and the consequent responsibilities follow and are pressed as in 1 Corinthians xii. 14. They must act on the principle of the Body of Christ; that is, they must include, in principle, all believers who are manifested as members of the One Body and exclude all whose conduct is radically at variance with such manifestation. Both of these responsibilities—the including and the excluding—are equally pressed on them and remain in full force to the end. Alas! in both we have utterly failed, as the confusion and the difficulties we are in, too clearly evidence. But if one of their number clearly denies his position by his conduct, whilst it does not absolutely follow that he is not still a member of the Body of Christ *as God knows it*, he is debarred from the privileges of the association, and is not *recognised* as a fellow-member of the Body as manifested on earth or as in the Assembly at all. He is, according to the principle of Matthew xviii., treated as "a heathen man and a publican;" not as a brother. What he *really* is must be left to God (2 Tim. ii. 19).

Thus, whilst there is "The Church which is His Body," composed of all true believers as known of God and of all time, and none but these (Eph. i. 22; v. 27, &c.), there is also its manifested expression "The Church" on earth (1 Cor. xii. 27), which should therefore correspond to that which is the Body of Christ in its limits or composition, in the character of its component parts as instinct with divine life, and showing this forth according to its nature, light, and love; in a word, must consist of the same members, as far as they can be recognised and are living upon the earth. For the *manifest* Church must and can only include *manifest* saints. Even "falling asleep" does not take them out of the Church as God sees and knows it, and which Christ shall yet present to Himself as a Church glorious (Eph. v.), whilst it undeniably takes them out of the Church *on earth*. Surely this is beyond controversy.

But this is not the teaching of the pamphlet under review.

It denies, quite correctly, that we receive into or put away from the mystic Body of Christ. ~~X~~ But it recognises something on earth not the Body at all; not, *even in principle*, of the same constitution as the Body, as expressing it—something for which is still claimed the title “The Church of God.” It does not include every manifest believer. There may be “but six” out of many in a place that are alone entitled to this name. All believers—clearly such—outside it are outside “*the Church of God*,” although *evidently inside* the *Body of Christ*. The responsibilities attached to membership of the Body of Christ are thus nullified entirely. How can we “submit ourselves” to those *outside* “The Church of God?” (Eph. v. 21; 1 Peter v. 5). How can I own that one is as necessary to me as the foot or hand to my body (1 Cor. xii.) when he is outside the Church of God on earth? In consistency it is impossible. On the other hand, must we not attribute evil to those outside the “Church of God on earth”; outside the only faithful circle where “*God and His Word have their place*?” Shall we not be ready to embrace every charge we can bring against them; welcome every accusation; put the worst construction on every word and deed; rejoice in their iniquity, since only by such means can our own claim be justified? Is not this absolutely the way these mistaken teachings *have* worked, and do still work?

Thus even two or three gathered ~~to~~ His Name may indeed be “The Church of God” as an expression of the One Body in any locality (and only in this sense are there “many Churches”), but not, we may say with assurance, as in contrast with, in separation from, opposed to, or exclusive of the feeblest and most unintelligent believer in the darkest sect in Christendom.* So suppose, if it be conceivable, that all had “left the Assembly except six,” the Church of God in Corinth would still have (assuming that it was not a question of fundamental error or wickedness) included the six, and also those who had left them. But why “six?” Why not three, two, or even one? Is this impossible? Would the *one* have still been “The Church of God”? or would there have been none at all on earth, at least in Corinth?

And this is what these brethren are forced to claim. Since there cannot be two opposing circles, each with equal claim to being the Church of God, but only one that is not “corrupted or corrupting,” where alone “God and His Word have their place”; then, clearly, all through the long, dark ages, until

* But we must not press this so far as to fall into another error of denying the local responsibility of each (local) Assembly to Christ its Head. For whatever may be said as to the letters to the Seven Assemblies in Asia, there should at least be no controversy that each Assembly is held responsible for its own condition. There is to be no human federal head on earth such as these exclusive circles practically necessitate.

this circle reappeared, there was no *Church of God on earth* at all. It quickly departed from the earth, and returned only with these claimants, *but with which?*

The fact is, the Church of God has always been on the earth all through the centuries that have intervened, but the *truth* of the Church has been utterly lost. Recovered at the beginning of the last century, when believers were led out of the various sects to gather to the One Name of the Lord Jesus Christ *in communion with all saints*, it was again lost, when renewed divisions took place amongst these, each section setting up its own claims. The truth still remains—man-humbling, Christ-exalting, stopping all accusations of brethren or defence of parties.

Of course each party ever claims with equal assurance and warmth that it still is “the only true Church,” and that it is clearly self-will on the part of all the others that keeps them aloof from it; this is, and has ever been, quite the usual thing, and sad evidence it is, for the most part, of carnality in the accusers. But the Holy Spirit would lift above these party bickerings; and asking, “Is Christ divided?” call all, bound together by a common divine life, and by the indwelling Spirit: “The Church of God, the Body of Christ in Corinth.” So, too, it is for faith now to ignore these divisions, and own amid all the confusion one Church of God, and that not excluding any evidenced saint.*

Our brother evidently thinks that Acts ix. 26 should settle the matter finally. Anyone who cannot see in this Scripture that there is an assembly of God on earth, to be joined, denies the Scripture! But does it follow equally surely: first, that the “joining” here was the divine pattern of a formal reception of a believer? Second, that this Church in Jerusalem was exactly the forerunner of R.T.H.’s “circle”? Surely as to the first it is perfectly clear that in all usual cases, and under ordinary circumstances, if anyone desired to identify himself with this despised unworldly company, there was no formality whatever, no introduction to the Apostles, no shrinking away

* The very word *Ecclesia* usually translated “Church” in New Testament evidences divine wisdom in its selection; enwrapping, as we may say, in itself the truths to which it is applied. Thus, first it is “E. C.,” “called out.” But from what? From the *world* clearly, from “this present evil age” (Gal. i.). Here is where the true *separation* is (Acts xv. 14). But next comes the force of the other idea in the word *Ecclesia*, “called.” This speaks, not of some power forcing out from within, “driving,” as we say, but of some voice heard without—some common object that *attracts* to itself. Thus these “called out” ones are not in separation from one another, but are closely united in a vital link with One central Person, “the Lord Jesus Christ,” and thus become the *Assembly*. Thus both separation and association are in the one word.

Many years ago a pamphlet was published entitled “Separation from Evil: God’s Principle of Unity.” Separation from evil alone may result in scattering as a wolf amid a flock of sheep. This negative truth must be connected with, and result from, its positive “*attraction to the good*.” The shepherd is the positive attraction that keeps the sheep together, as Christ is alone the divinely attractive Object, making His people “the *Assembly*.” The separation results from this.

on the part of the disciples. He simply came, confessed his faith, and was—the genuineness of the confession being recognised—received amongst them at once as a believer, or “joined himself to them” (we are not afraid of the word “joined” so used). Saul’s was an *extraordinary* case. One whom they had only known as a rampant, violent persecutor presents himself as a disciple. They naturally fear treachery, and they avoid him. Barnabas is there; he can speak for Saul, and does, so that the suspicion is definitely and forever removed. On this extraordinary and unusual occurrence is built up this structure of reception. It insists, in direct opposition to the Scripture it appeals to, that we must not now, as they evidently did then, let the spontaneous outflow of the divine life have its natural course, and receive simply, gladly, unreservedly, yet carefully, with exercise before the Lord, to our company, all in whom we can discern clear evidences of new birth and fellow-membership of the one Body; but we must find what answers to “the Apostles” in some who “rule,”* and these must certify for us every case, *though it bear no likeness whatever to that in Acts ix. 27.*

As to the second, that any of these modern circles whence saints are excluded answers to this Assembly in Jerusalem, the claimants will pardon us if we cannot at once accept their own word for it. *That* certainly included every believer not under Scriptural discipline for wickedness; *these* as certainly exclude thousands of such. This is enough to convince us that their claim cannot be allowed; *that* was “the Church,” *these* we are compelled to call merely sects.

But according to our brother, Saul was outside “The Church of God on earth” until these unusual details had been gone through at Jerusalem. If he considers, he will surely see that this is untenable, for Saul had already been over three years at Damascus clearly “joined to” or identified with the disciples there (Gal. i. 18). Was he both inside and outside at the same time? Inside “The Church of God” in one place, outside that same Church at another? R. T. H. would be compelled to answer “yes” to this; for he clearly could not be *received* in if he *were* in. But this would destroy the unity of the Church and make many churches, not merely separated by the accident—as we may call it—of distance, but in actual constitution. Scripture teaches that there is a unity of the whole—as when Saul persecuted “the Church” wherever he found its members (Gal. i. 13)—and anyone inside that one Church is inside, whether he be at Jerusalem or at Damascus.

Difficulties in individual cases will ever exist, and it is well they do. The discernment of leprosy will always require

* Which itself opens up an interesting question which I must not follow.

priestly, *i.e.*, absolutely dependent judgment. Our natural tendency is to displace dependence by human rules such as R. T. H. endeavours to defend by a reference to Acts ix. 27. The way of Scripture is to draw us nearer to our Lord by our difficulties, make us realise our needs and poverty, and give us greater joy as we experience how full and sufficient for every case is the Lord "in the midst." Such human rules are but Philistine cords that would bind the free action of His Spirit in His people.

This, then, clears the way for a consideration of the main contention of the pamphlet, and, as an illustration of its teachings, I must quote a question and its answer :

"Are there not many now, who have been received by the Lord, and built up as living stones, but who, instead of being received into a scripturally gathered Assembly, have been brought into a sect? Have not such to be received as a young Christian or even with a greater care, seeing that the one just converted has not had time to take the wrong step of joining a sect?' The answer is, 'A young convert was received when he had repented and been converted to God. Surely 2 Timothy ii. 25 implies the need of repentance on the part of those who have been ensnared by the devil. This repentance God alone can give, and surely we are responsible to see that it is given before we receive into our fellowship those thus ensnared'."

This is important as showing that there is no question raised as to these applicants being true children of God. They have been "received by the Lord," are "built up as living stones," and, since there is no possible way of knowing this except by the fruit or activity of the new nature, we are compelled to assume that these fruits are, in some clear measure at least, evidenced in a life of holiness and love. It is true that the writer applies 2 Timothy ii. 25 to them as being in "the snare of the devil," but we are never compelled to accept these human applications of solemn Scriptures as if they were of the same force as the Scriptures themselves. To say that an ecclesiastical position, not at all inconsistent with such fruits of holiness as evidence "repentance towards God," the being "living stones" and having "been received of the Lord" is what the Spirit of God intended by "the snare of the devil," and being "taken captive by him" is certainly to be rejected as a serious misapplication, practically nullifying the true force of this Scripture.

Let us first ask—Are these clearly evidenced fellow-members of the Body of Christ to be accounted, in obedience to Scripture, *inside* or *outside* the Church of God on earth? We have in fact really answered this question already in finding this Church of God on earth to be but the expression of the mystic Body of Christ. Every evidenced member of that Body, as these are admitted to be, has therefore a divinely-given place

in that which answers to it on earth. The passage in Romans xv. 7, "Receive ye one another," &c., quoted also by the writer, is in perfect harmony with this. For then, as now, there were similar differences between saints. Some (the strong), with clear discernment, had been freed from the fetters of their early legal or ecclesiastical teaching; others (the weak) were still bound. The strong are addressed as likely to look down upon the less intelligent, and are told to "receive" them, but not with the purpose of settling for them what might be doubtful in their minds, nor to *force* them into line with their own clearer intelligence. I cannot of course go through the whole Scripture, enjoyable and profitable as it might be, but turn at once to chapter xv. 5: "Now the God of patience and of comfort [precious and significant titles in this connection] grant you to be of the same mind one with another *according to Christ Jesus*" (R.V.). He is the binding link. Not "think exactly alike," not "have the same degree of intelligence in every matter," but still be *one* in a deeper feeling that overtops all these smaller matters; one in glorifying "God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." His glory lies in your unity. It is true that you have different temperaments, different degrees of intelligence; and that, apart from Him, you would "judge" and "despise" one another, or fly apart. All *that* can be done *without Him*; but notwithstanding such differences, to have no division, no judging, no despising, this glorifies, because it evidences God.

Thus God's glory is involved in the mutual consideration, love, care, patience, and expressed unity of His people. So it is written, "Receive* ye one another," not "into fellowship" as the language of the day and of the pamphlet is. No, no; they were all "in fellowship" in Rome even then. They were not separated. They were not all "strong" in Rome; and, as such, to receive "into fellowship" any weak one who might come to them; but the Christians in Rome were weak *and* strong. They were to embrace each other closely, as having been received by the same grace; not to get away from each other into cliques, but keep close together; for, since Christ had received each, *they WERE already "in fellowship."*

Our brother is truly right in his plea for holiness and separation from all known evil of whatever character or degree, yea, from the slightest defilement. But in putting all that does not accord with his own standard of intelligence on the same level

* The word for "receive" here and in chapter xiv. 1 is in itself opposed to the idea of formal reception "into fellowship." *Proslambano* is literally "to take to," and we have a colloquialism that is nearly equivalent to this. We say people *take to* each other, *i.e.*, some bond or attraction draws them together. Exactly so here. Ye that are strong "take to" the weak or take them to you. You have a common bond of attraction greater than all other differences.

as sin against the person or work of Christ he is wrong. When he insists on repentance of the evil of sectarianism being exactly on the same level (as far as being in the Church, or outside where God judgeth, is concerned), as repentance of the evil of rejection of the Gospel of Christ (page 2), he has fallen, and is leading others, into the very evil he so strongly deprecates: he puts a wrong ecclesiastical position on a level with fundamental wickedness, is himself sectarian, and therefore in a wrong ecclesiastical position.

Thus, in his zeal for holiness, he holds up J. R. C. to the strongest reprobation for insisting that "the basis of the Assembly according to the Scriptures must be broad enough to admit of the carnal as well as the spiritual." "It is," he says, "unblushing advocacy" of carnality. Indeed; was it, then, unblushing advocacy of defilement to leave the defiled inside the camp, as in many cases the Scriptures do, whilst even being outside that camp was not exactly equivalent to being outside the company of the Lord's people now? * Nay, how is it that the Lord actually gives permission for some to be defiled (Lev. xxi. 3), or commands that to be done the doing of which necessarily defiles? (Num. xix. 3, 8, 18, 21). Defilement and wickedness are one and the same according to our brother R. T. H. This is, I judge, a common mistake shared by all advocates of unscriptural exclusion. He would treat alike, as far as discipline is concerned, carnality in the Christian, and presumptuous, wilful rebellion against God. And if any dissent, it is "unblushing advocacy" of carnality.

But R. T. H. clearly recognises the possibility of carnality of those inside even his circle: the "failing," of Christians "once spiritual becoming carnal," but what stirs his indignation is the deliberate *reception* of such.

The root of the question is, Does carnality necessarily put outside the assembly of God? Is excision or "putting away" of the person the scriptural way of dealing with it? Does R. T. H. at once put away everyone he esteems to have "failed" and "become" carnal? Where can he draw the line between "carnal" and "spiritual"? Surely we can only tell a low or carnal condition of soul by external evidences, its fruits; and the character of the action taken must depend, if we bow to Scripture, on the seriousness of these. It will be well, too, to remember that carnality is not confined to one kind of evil; it has many forms—contention, strife, wrath, indignation, divisions, sects, and self-complacent pharisaism that separates from the Lord's people, than which nothing is more subtle or pernicious; that, too, is carnality. Is this altogether lacking in these days? *If not, where is it?*

* For proof of this I must refer to a little paper "Defilement and Wickedness."

The merely defiled man in Scripture is never to be "put away" from among the Lord's people, as directed in 1 Cor. v. Here is another "unblushing advocacy" of defilement. Nay, my brother, the defilement was always to be put away from the brother; not the brother put away—he is counted as, or admitted to be, within. And, I say again, this is at the root of R. T. H.'s mistaken reasoning. He, too, cries, "Does association with evil defile?" Of course it does; but we ask, in reply, "Is the defiled one to be cast out?" Who would be "in" if this were truly carried out? In whom is there no carnality? Who is never defiled?

Do we plead for carnality in so speaking? God knows, we plead for *God's way of dealing with one carnal or defiled*. "Outside," whether put out or kept out, we can do nothing for him; there, God judgeth. But the Lord has taught a more excellent way.

There are three degrees of evil clearly recognised in the New Testament. First, there was that which appears unavoidable to any with an evil nature still within who walks through this defiled scene; his feet, by that very fact, become defiled—they ever need washing. Happy he who has learned how, in lowly self-judgment, to wash a brother's defiled feet. The Lord Jesus, in His love that nothing transcends, still thus serves, as He did on that dark night (John xiii.).

Next, there is the more positive *fall into evil*. A sudden trip-up, so that not the feet only but the clothes need washing, and the man needs lifting up. \ This requires corresponding greater spirituality, for "carnal" indeed must the brother or sister be now. Nevertheless, he is not to be "put out" yet, but *restored* in the spirit of meekness. With no rod in the hand, but with the lowly hyssop of self-judgment must one go to him (Gal. vi. 1). It is a spurious, carnal zeal that would rush to judgment in such cases, and much have we suffered from it.

But, lastly, there is a persistent activity of fleshly will at enmity with God which characterises the person as "wicked" (1 Cor. v.). No washing is possible here. It is "the presumptuous sin" (Ps. xix. 30) of wickedness; and as the wicked are like that "troubled sea" to which One and only One can say, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed" (Job xxxviii. 2), they must be put, where none but such are to be put, *OUTSIDE*; for "them that are without, God judgeth" (1 Cor. v.).

It is the difference between walking through mud, falling on mud, or rolling in mud. Our brother's pamphlet does away with these divine discriminations. Whilst on the one hand professing Churches ignore all discipline, this teaching, on the other, apportioned capital punishment for comparatively trivial offences.

R. T. H. appeals to 2nd Timothy ii. as justifying, and even necessitating, separation from those who may be recognised as true saints:

"The Apostle had two circles in view, one in which they were corrupted and corrupting, and another in which Timothy was to be found. In the first, man's word and will prevailed, and in the latter the will and word of the Lord."

I could wish to go into this much misused Scripture with some of the detailed care it calls for,* but space forbids. Is it not a striking and suggestive phenomenon that all these mutually destructive exclusive parties invariably appeal to this 2nd Timothy ii. to justify their position? Now, it is clear to the simplest on the face of it that the direct intent of the Scripture is to *gather together* (apart from wickedness) all "those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." None of these brethren have any doubt or question as to doing this *themselves*, nor will we raise such question, but thankfully own it; and yet they scatter, and fly apart from, and condemn one another on the basis of this Scripture. They are either in flat disobedience to it or deny that *any saints but themselves are calling on the Lord out of a pure heart!* Is it not clear that the Scripture is utterly misapplied when it is made to teach that saint must be separate from saint, "vessels to honour" from each other? Timothy would have found it difficult work indeed to have discovered in these days, amid all these claimants, that *one* pure, "uncorrupted circle" in which alone "the Lord's will and word prevail," in which alone they were "calling on the Lord out of a pure heart." But we have it when we include and take in *every evident saint* who thus shows that he calls on the Lord out of a pure heart, for it is true faith alone that does purify the heart (Acts xv. 9, xxvi. 18). But if any, irrespective of who he be, so persistently continues in association with known wickedness that his own character is thereby exposed, he must be treated as a wicked person. This does not mean, as is the inconsistent practice (often happily so) of all unscriptural exclusiveness, that fellowship may be shown everywhere except at the Lord's Table; but no fellowship must be shown—not the slightest—anywhere: not so much as the partaking of a meal in common (1 Cor. v.), or an ordinary salutation (2 John). But, for this, wickedness must be very clearly evidenced, and short of this there is scope for much patient grace in dealing with one another. How good and right are God's ways!

R. T. H. also takes J. R. severely to task for objecting to knowledge being the basis of fellowship. But *is* "knowledge the basis (of fellowship) after all?" Would it not

* For an attempt of this see "Vessels to Honour: What are they?" (D. T. Bass 24 West 22nd Street, New York.)

be far more correct to say that *Life* is the basis, and the knowledge of which R. T. H. speaks is only one of the characteristic activities or accompaniments of this life? None can have the new Life without knowledge (although it may be much obscured by many things). Hence, "I write unto you, little children"—the very youngest, "because there is something that you have in virtue of *being* children of God. You know the Father." Again, "This is *Life* eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God." Life is the basis of all: and Light and Love in all their blended beauties are the characteristics of this one divine Life: a common Intelligence, Wisdom, Knowledge, Love, Hate, Fear, Hope are shared in measure by all partaking of the Common Life, and this is really true fellowship. We love the same Objects, that is, we have communion in this. We know the same Father; that is communion, and so on.

But R. T. H. denies this. One must have a knowledge not of the Father simply, but that really comes through experience, and perhaps never. The babe, saved, new-born, knowing the Father, blessed under the ministry of some faithful servant in a "denomination" (and there have ever been many and are still some, God be thanked) must repent of the sin of being in a sect where at least God met him; must repudiate a connection which he only knows as identified with his eternal blessing, or be refused—left outside the only "Church of God on earth," under the severest discipline known to the Scriptures of the New Testament and reserved for wicked persons. Is it not manifest folly?

Nor, in saying this, do we say at all what R. T. H. justly deprecates—that God blesses the sect as such. Not at all. But He has ever blessed His people *in the sects*, as He could never do if they were continuing *in wickedness*.

Does this, after all, then commend R. T. H.'s Church as really "the One"? ~~X~~ Is it the one pure circle where Love and Grace are as evident as Light and Holiness? Or must we sorrowfully say, judged in the light of Scripture, as sectarian and evil in that sense as any ever conceived.

To sum up, the Church of God on earth must correspond to and *express* the Church which is His Body. In fact, they are not to be esteemed as two Churches in constitution, but one as the local Church represents the whole Church on earth is a kind of microcosm; that as this is composed of every true believer, so on earth of all those who can be recognised as such; that not every sin necessitates the "putting away"; but as this is the extreme of discipline, it is reserved for fundamental wickedness alone. Still no degree of evil is to be

treated with indifference, but met in the energy of the Spirit in the way marked out in the Scriptures already referred to.

That with those under discipline for wickedness not the slightest fellowship must be expressed. It is quite contrary to Scripture to express Christian fellowship with any to whom it is denied at the Lord's Table.

That an ecclesiastical position is not necessarily of this awful character, especially in this day of confusion, and in view of the stumbling-blocks that the bickerings and sectarian strife of those *out* of denominations have put before the feet of the Lord's people in them. And that to cut off the members of Christ's Body involved in sects is the worst form of sectarianism, for it is connected with much pretension to superior knowledge.

As a last word, although it may be thought outside the *direct* matter of the pamphlet under review, yet as it does bear very vitally on it, I must ask attention, as briefly as possible, to a most striking parallel between the path of Israel and that of the Church. We have divine warrant to expect such parallels. "Now, all these things happened to them for types." 1 Corinthians x. 2 may well open our hearts to expect correspondences even beyond those in their wilderness wanderings, and that they do not cease to furnish types after crossing the Jordan. It is quite clear that in this crossing the children of Israel were brought at length to their own land, God's ground for them, filled with every evidence of God's blessing in fountain and food and the wealth of the hills (Deut. viii.). Such blessedness led to that joyous heart-separation to Jehovah, telling of His all-sufficiency, Nazariteship. But Israel sinned, turned to idolatry, and eventually were carried captive to Babylon. A remnant was brought back once more to their own land, God's ground for them. Very lowly are they, and confess again and again that they are but "servants" (Neh. ix. 36); they were one with their brethren in Babylon. They make no pretension to *being a restored nation*. Never more is there the same external evil; never more external idolatry; but gradually—instead of the God-honouring, man-humbling spirit of *Nazariteship*—separation to Jehovah in a joy independent of earth's wine—a strength made perfect in weakness—a moral elevation speaking of another life above this death-filled scene; there grows up a man-exalting spirit of *separation from others*, as superior in holiness to them; of pride being free from the sin of their fathers, whilst going on to the same sin in an infinitely worse form (Matt. xxiii. 29-36). And so was it when the Lord Jesus came the first time. He found His people Israel permeated through and through with all kinds of evil,

but peculiarly with pharisaism; it was the characteristic evil of those last days.

Is the correspondence difficult to trace? Would that it were. We have been delivered from a worse Egypt, brought to our own land—Christ, blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings. Did not those early days of the Book of Acts witness, too, a joyous Nazarite-separation to the Lord Jesus with confession of the all-sufficiency of His Name, His work? But, alas! the parallel goes on. The Church as a witness on earth sinned—lusted after other things in this world than her own heavenly portion in Christ. This lusting or covetousness was *her* idolatry. Then she was given over captive to Babylon—*i.e.*, confusion. Is it not true? Look about if you doubt it, and tell me if anything more thoroughly expresses “confusion” than that which has ruled now for long years on all sides. But grace has lingered still, and worked, and a remnant early in the last century were brought back to their own land once more, to God’s ground for them, to Christ—the sufficiency of His holy Name, of His attractive Person, of His finished work. Lowly, too, were they at first; no pretention at all made they to being exclusively “The Church.” They, too, owned God’s Hand in humbling and chastening His people; they were one with their brethren everywhere, and although the world must give them a distinguishing name, they accepted but such as were common to all saints.

Must we trace the parallel further? Has there been a quiet, steady growth of pharisaism—self-exalting, self-complacent pharisaism? Separation, not *to* the Lord Jesus, but *from* brethren, as more spiritual, holier, not defiled or carnal as they? Has there been the same proud disavowal of any connection with the sin of our fathers—sectarianism—whilst we, too, go on to sectarianism in a worse form? And shall He find, when He comes the second time, the sad evidence of revolution in human history, “nothing new under the sun?”

What means this Scripture at the very last to the Church in Laodicea—the condition at the end: “Thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing”? It would ill become one to attack or accuse another, for in one form or other the same condemnation is on us all. But do we not well to be warned? Let us hold fast “The Head,” in conscious need and dependence, so truly shall we be in the Church of God, not to be spued out of His mouth, but caught up to meet Him in the air.

“’Tis joy enough, my all in all,
At Thy dear feet to lie;
Thou wilt not let me lower fall,
And none can higher fly.”