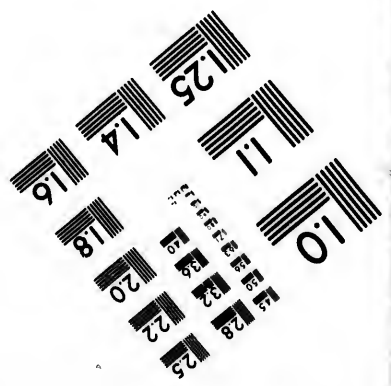
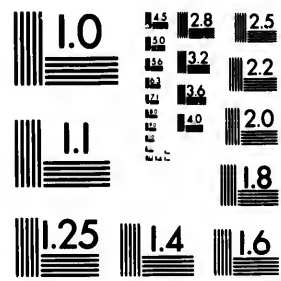


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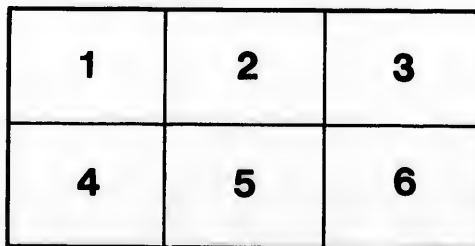
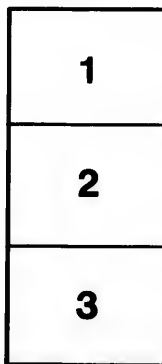
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THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT
OR
FAILURE OF BRETHRENISM

AS A UNITED TESTIMONY

WITH SOME REMARKS UPON

Holiness People and the Holiness
Movement.

BY
W. J. FENTON.

"That they all may be one . . . that the world may believe."—JOHN xvii. 21.

"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."—EPH. iv. 3.

"Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?"—ACTS xix. 2 (R. V.)

"Be filled with the Spirit."—EPH. v. 18.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."—REV. iii. 20.

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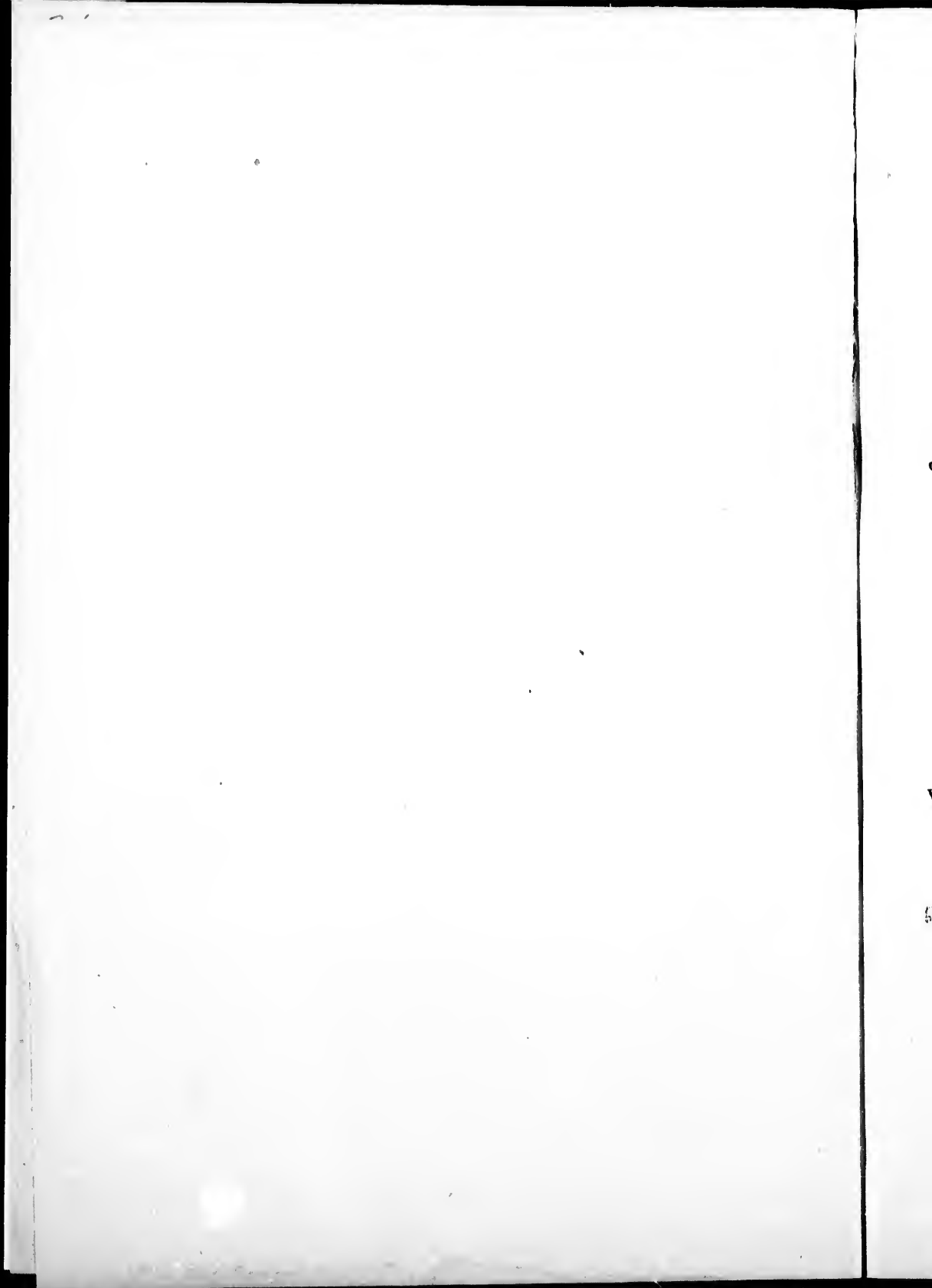
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P R E F A C E .

THE writer of the following pages desires it to be distinctly understood that he only uses the words "Brethren," "Brethrenism," "Holiness People," etc., as generic terms, to distinguish certain classes of testimony in the Church at the present time, which cannot well be described so briefly in any other way, so as to be understood by general readers. He has not intended to use these words as terms of reproach or ridicule; his objects in publishing this book having been to show how human failure, although connected with much precious truth, has hindered such a manifestation of unity as the Lord Jesus Christ prayed for in John xvii. 21; and also to impress upon the hearts of Christians, that the only practical way in which that prayer can be answered in them, is by their "endeavouring (in the power of the Holy Spirit) to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," not only with those who may see eye to eye with them, but also with all who are united to Christ by a living faith, and indwelt by the one Spirit; remembering that there is only "one body, and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

If what has been written proves to be the means of showing Christians, in all kinds of ecclesiastical positions, their need of mutual forbearance, one with another, in matters where fundamental truth is not in question, and wherein the absence of express directions in the Word of God leaves room for differences in judgment, he will not regret the time spent in preparing these pages for publication.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. Origin of Brethrenism.....	7
II. The Mistakes of Leading Teachers and their Consequences.	14
III. Erroneous Teaching on the Doctrine of Separation.....	20
IV. Want of Scriptural Order in Many Assemblies of Brethren...	26
V. Mistaken Views as to the Church's Present Position in the World	31
VI. Undue Prominence Given to One Ordinance.....	37
VII. Attitude of Brethren Towards Ministers.....	40
VIII. Holiness People	43
IX. Sound Doctrine in Connection with the Holiness Movement	51
X. Addresses to the Churches at Philadelphia and Laodicea ...	58
XI. Mystery, Babylon the Great	62
XII. Necessity of Mutual Forbearance as to Church Position, etc.	70.

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The Unity of the Spirit, or Failure of Brethrenism

AS A UNITED TESTIMONY.

CHAPTER I.

Origin of Brethrenism.

IT is a remarkable fact that in the New Testament Scriptures no express rules are laid down for Church organization or government. This doubtless is one reason for the many ecclesiastical systems that exist at the present day amongst those who are really anxious to be guided by the Word of God, in their religious work and worship, and in fellowship with each other as members of the body of Christ.

The question naturally arises: Why is it that no specific plan is laid down for the guidance of Christians in such matters during this dispensation? We see that under the Mosaic economy the most minute details are given by God, as to the manner in which His ancient people were to worship and serve Him. With regard to the earthly tabernacle Moses was admonished by God: "See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed thee in the mount" (Heb. viii. 5). And after the Israelites entered into the land of promise there was to be one certain place only, "which the Lord their God had chosen, to put His name there" in which they were to offer their burnt offerings and their sacrifices (Deut. xii). This place, by divine appointment, was first at Shiloh, and afterwards at Jerusalem.

If it were a matter of great importance how or where Christians are to meet, or what form of Church government they should adopt, the Scriptures would not be silent on the subject. But the very opposite is taught in our Lord's discourse with the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar (John iv. 20-24). And in the Epistle to the Hebrews we read of our great High Priest now appearing "in the presence of God for us," of "the true Tabernacle" in the heavens, where He is, of the one great sacrifice for sin, and of the "spiritual sacrifices" which we, as worshippers, should offer, as we "enter into the holiest" of all by the blood of Jesus; in striking contrast with the legalism and formalism of the Mosaic ritual, all of whose services and sacrifices were only dim types and shadows of that more glorious dispensation of the Holy Spirit in which we live.

The history of this has, like that of all former dispensations, been a history of failure, from the days of the Apostles down to the present time. But there is reason to believe that many Christians are becoming aroused to the consciousness that the main cause of this failure is the practical non-recognition of the truth that the Holy Spirit has really come to dwell in the heart of each individual believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is true that all evangelical Christians profess to believe that, in some indefinable way, He does dwell in the Church, and guide into the truth of Scripture. But this is something very different from the teaching of the Word and the experience of Pentecost, which reveal Him to us as a living person, whom it is our privilege to receive as the Spirit of Christ, to whose power every member of His mystical body should be subject.

When the Master was personally present as a man upon earth with His disciples, it would have been absurd to lay down rules and regulations as to how they should act in His presence. All they needed was to know His will each moment, as occasion required, from His own lips, in order that they might do it. And before leaving them He said that those who believe on Him should do greater works than He did, because He was going to the Father, and He would pray

the Father to give them another Comforter to abide with them forever, even the Spirit of truth, "whom," said He, "the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John xiv. 12-17). And further on in the same discourse He said, "I will not leave you desolate; (Rev. Ver.); I will come to you" (ver. 18); and again, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love Him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." In John xv. 26 He said, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me." And in John xvi. He said, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for, if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you (ver. 7); and again, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth is come He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak from (Rev. Ver.) Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (vers. 12-14).

It does seem extraordinary that, in the face of such explicit statements, made by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, there should be, throughout the Church generally, in all ages, from Pentecost down to the present time, so little practical recognition of the indwelling presence and power of the Comforter, who, as the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of truth, proceeding from the Father, now enters into a much more intimate relationship with the believer than the Lord Jesus Christ himself had with His disciples on earth, before He returned to the Father in heaven. Then it was only His occasional bodily presence with them. Now it is His abiding presence, in the believer, by the Holy Spirit as His representative, and possessing the same power as when He dwelt in the Lord himself during His public ministry here, after He was baptized of John in the Jordan.

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of

God" (1 Cor. ii. 14); and so it comes to pass that carnal Christians, and unconverted church members and adherents, fail to comprehend the Holy Spirit's personal presence and power and mode of operations; although they may learn much of the letter of the Word, and of the leading doctrines which it unfolds.

Church history shews that the simplicity of Pentecostal times, as described in the Acts of the Apostles, was not long preserved. The deeds and doctrines of the Nicolaitans, or clerisy, soon made its appearance. The royal priesthood of all believers was soon lost sight of, and an order of men established as a professional clergy to perform the religious work of the Church. The unholy alliance between the Church and the world was consummated, and with but very few exceptions, the professing Church became a mass of nominal Christians, without the life of God, or the power of the Holy Spirit. Under these circumstances it is little wonder that the very simplest fundamental truths of the Gospel soon became almost lost sight of.

After the dense darkness of the Middle Ages, Luther and other early Reformers, by the study of the Word, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, brought to light "Justification by Faith," and many other truths of Scripture; and the preaching of the Gospel was blessed of God to the salvation of many souls. But the principles of Church organization and government, which prevailed before the Reformation, continued in various forms and degrees in the different denominations, which followed the teaching of certain distinguished leaders to whom they owed their origin; and these leaders seem to have relied mainly on the example of the early Church, after the days of Pentecostal simplicity were over, if they did not almost slavishly follow that of the Romish Church during the Middle Ages. In England and Germany the forms were much the same, but the Sovereign of the State, instead of the Pope of Rome, was recognized as the head of the Church. In Scotland the Presbyterian form of government was adopted, instead of the Episcopal, but the Sovereign was there also recognized as the head of the relig-

ious organization. In all these cases the alliance between the Church and State was soon followed by its natural results. The greater part of the clergy were only professionals, who were placed in lucrative livings by the influence of political friends. As blind leaders of the blind, their ministry was most injurious to the people over whom they were placed.

But a great wave of revival passed over England under the preaching of the Wesleys and Whitfield, who, in the power of the Spirit, boldly warned the ungodly of coming judgment, and pointed them to Jesus as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Under their earnest preaching multitudes were converted to God; and the laity (as they were called) were encouraged to take part in religious exercises, and use their gifts, in some measure, under the direction of the clergy. This was a great step in advance towards recognizing the priesthood of all believers, but the distinction between clergy and laity was still retained. John Wesley himself had no desire to separate from the Church of England, while he sought to draw out and develop the gifts of the laity, and to promote holiness of life amongst all classes by precept and example. The form of Church government, however, that was founded through the labours of himself, his brother Charles, and other earnest preachers, still retained the principle of clerisy; and, in fact, down to the present time, the clergy have supreme control over all affairs of the Methodist denomination, although a large measure of liberty is allowed to the laity in religious work.

The next great step towards a return to the simplicity of the early Church, immediately after Pentecost, was a movement that took place in Great Britain and Ireland, in the early part of the present century. when many godly ministers and other Church members were led to come out of the various denominations with which they had been connected, and gather in little meetings simply in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and assemble on Lord's Day for the purpose of remembering Him in the breaking of bread, without having any man to preside, and "administer the Sacrament," as it was called. Those who came out in this way professed to hold, among other things:

1. That all God's people are Clergy, because He declares that they are all an holy priesthood, and a royal priesthood (1 Pet. ii. 5-9).
2. That all believers are members of "one body," of which Christ is the head, and have all been baptized into that "one body" by the Holy Spirit.
3. That it is unscriptural to be unequally yoked with unconverted persons as Church members.
4. That all sectarianism is sin.
5. That the Word of God should be the only rule of faith and practice.
6. That in meetings for worship the Holy Spirit should be allowed to guide through whom He will, and that it is therefore wrong for any man to usurp His place.
7. That the Lord's Second or Pre-millennial Coming is the great hope of the Church.

The united testimony of many spiritual men to so many important truths at a time when the great bulk of the professing Church was engrossed in worldliness, and the great majority of its members, and many of its ministers, were unconverted, was extraordinary in its results. Many thousands of genuine Christians separated from the various denominations with which they had been connected, and an immense impetus was given to the study of the Word of God, without the help of commentaries, under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the little assemblies of Christians gifts were developed, and many earnest preachers of the Gospel were raised up, who devoted themselves to evangelistic work, and called upon all who were truly children of God to form, or unite with, assemblies similar to those with which they had themselves been connected.

Such a movement as this naturally excited hostility on the part of the various denominations, and this was intensified by many unwise expressions by hot-headed speakers, whose zeal was greater than their discretion. One of the most notable of the early assemblies amongst Brethren was that at Plymouth, on account of the ability and spirituality of some of its leading teachers; and so it came to pass that the name

"Plymouth Brethren" was applied generally to all who had thus separated from the various ecclesiastical systems around them, and professedly gathered simply in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This name has not, however, been adopted by them, and is only regarded as a term of reproach given by their adversaries. At the same time they do not object to be called "Brethren," which is a Scriptural name, and the reader will please bear in mind that, in speaking of the movement referred to as "Brethrenism," this term is used simply for the sake of brevity, to describe a certain line of testimony in the professing Church.

CHAPTER II.

The Mistakes of Leading Teachers and Their Consequences.

THE great ability and spirituality of the first leaders amongst Brethren; the manner in which they unfolded many important truths of Scripture, and denounced abuses in the professing Church, which were only too apparent, all conspired to give confidence to their followers. It soon became evident that a new order of things was expected. Believers were called upon to "come out of Babylon." Little assemblies of Christians were formed in various parts of Christendom professing to be gathered simply in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in subjection to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In most cases, earnest endeavours were made to follow the example, as recorded in Scripture, of the Pentecostal Church, in their organization and manner of worship. Clerisy or (see Note) Nicolaitanism (from Nicolaitans, "conquerors of the people")

NOTE.—In reference to the word "Nicolaitans," the writer would explain that, in order to avoid controversy, he has assumed the correctness of the meaning generally given to it by Brethren. But it is only fair to state that on this subject there is much difference of opinion among the best authorities.

Thayer's Greek and English Lexicon says that Nicolaites meant a follower of Nicolaus, a name which it can scarcely be doubted, refers symbolically to the same persons who in Rev. ii. 14 are charged with holding the doctrine of Balaam; after the example of Balaam casting a stumbling block before the Church of God, by upholding the liberty of eating things offered to idols, as well as of committing fornication; for the Greek word "Nicolaus" coincides with the Hebrew word "Balaam" according to the interpretation of the latter, which regards it as signifying "Destruction of the people."

Fausset's Critical Expository Cyclopaedia says in reference to the word "Nicolaitans"—Nicolas (conqueror of the people) is the Greek for Hebrew Balaam (destroyer of the people)—not a sect, but professing Christians, who,

was justly held in abhorrence, at least in the form in which it was then most apparent. The presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, by His Spirit, was recognized in meetings for breaking of bread and for prayer, so that no man was allowed to preside, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit became very manifest. In some of these assemblies there was a distinct recognition of eldership, and godly oversight was exercised; and teaching, pastoral and evangelistic gifts, were encouraged and developed; with much blessing to the Church and the world within the reach of their influence.

Pre-eminent amongst these assemblies was that known as the Bethesda meeting at Bristol, England, where Mr. George Muller, so well known in connection with his great work of faith in the Orphan Houses at Ashley Down, was, and still is, the recognized leader. Associated with him and his work were many godly brethren, who, as pastors and teachers engaged in the ministry, without fee or reward; whilst Mr. Muller gave up the salary he had formerly received as a clergyman, and looked only to the Lord for the supply of his temporal wants. His example was followed by many others, and has, with the orphanage work, had an immense influence on the Church of God throughout Christendom, in leading those engaged in the Lord's work to realize that it is the living God with whom they have to do, and that if they serve Him faithfully they can rely upon Him to supply all their temporal wants, without making their circumstances known to any human being. The principle thus put into practice on such an extensive scale, has been one of the most powerful factors in furthering evangelistic and missionary work during the present century. Mr. Muller himself, now in his ninety-second year, is still actively engaged in the Lord's

Balaam-like, introduced a false freedom or licentiousness. A reaction from Judaism, the first danger of the Church. The Jerusalem Council (Acts xv. 20, 29) whilst releasing Gentile converts from legalism, required their abstinence from idol meats and concomitant fornication. The Nicolaitans abused Paul's doctrine of the grace of God into lasciviousness. Such seducers are described as followers of Balaam; also in 2 Peter ii, 12, 13, 15, 19, Jude 4, 7, 8, 11 ("the son of Bosor"—for Beor, to characterise him as "Son of carnality"; bosor—flesh).

work, preaching and teaching with a vigour that is truly wonderful, and presenting one of the finest examples in modern times of a fully consecrated and Spirit-filled Christian.

Two other very prominent leaders amongst Brethren were Mr. J. N. Darby and Mr. B. W. Newton, both formerly clergymen of great spiritual gifts. They were both godly brethren, and voluminous writers, but differed in their views of certain truths, especially with regard to some details connected with the Lord's Second Coming. Mr. Darby held that there would be a secret rapture of the saints, which Mr. Newton denied. Each of them had enthusiastic followers, and the breach grew wider, until, at length, a charge of heresy was laid against Mr. Newton for some expressions he had made use of in one of his pamphlets, when commenting on several passages in the Psalms, in which he referred to the Lord's human nature. When his expressions were brought before him as objectionable, Mr. Newton declared that he never intended them to convey such a meaning as seemed to be implied by the language used, and, it is said, that he withdrew the pamphlet from circulation. Not satisfied with this, however, Mr. Darby and his sympathizers travelled throughout the Mother Country and America, visiting assemblies, and calling upon Christians everywhere to separate from Mr. Newton, and all who would not refuse to have fellowship with him. Thus the wedge of division was first brought in, and Satan succeeded in marring what promised to be a united testimony of Christians, gathered simply in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, on principles held by many thousands who had severed their connection with various denominations, under the full conviction that God had required them to do so.

Many assemblies submitted to Mr. Darby and those associated with him, and, having "judged the question," declared that they would not receive Mr. Newton or any who would not repudiate him and his supposed heresies. These became known as "Exclusive Brethren." Many others, including the Bethesda meeting at Bristol, declared that they would not submit to Mr. Darby's dictation in this

matter, as they believed he was pursuing an unscriptural course. Those who took this stand were called by the Exclusive Brethren, "Neutrals," and have been since generally known as "Open Brethren."

Mr. Newton himself afterwards confessed that the language used in some parts of the objectionable pamphlet was wrong, although he had no intention of conveying the impression that might be taken from it, and which he regarded with horror. In spite of this, however, he continued to be pursued with such a storm of defamation that he finally withdrew altogether from fellowship with Brethren, and, during the latter part of his life (about 30 or 40 years) has been, it is said, labouring as an independent minister in England.

The differences between these two eminent and godly teachers led to most unhappy results, in so far as the testimony of Brethren was concerned. Mr. Darby and his followers boldly assumed the position of being the only true representation of the Church of God upon earth, claiming to be gathered upon the ground of the "One Body," in separation from all evil. The confederation of assemblies with which they were connected did not hesitate to condemn as schismatics all "Open Brethren" or "Neutrals," as they called them, who refused to submit to their dictation with regard to the judging of evil (not in their own assembly), when required to do so by any leading brethren. The extraordinary theory was formulated, that, as "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (I. Cor. v. 6), so the whole of an assembly (which is a representation of the "One Body" on earth) is defiled by any evil doctrine held by one of its members, and that the only way for other assemblies, in the same circle of fellowship, to purge themselves from the imputation of similar defilement is to "judge the question," and refuse to receive any one who would not judge it, no matter whether he held the evil doctrine himself or not. And thus it soon came to pass that those known as "Exclusive Brethren" not only denounced all the denominations as being in "Babylon," but also condemned the "Open Brethren" as schismatics, who professed to be simply gathered in the Name of the Lord

Jesus Christ, but did not approve of what they believed to be an arbitrary course on the part of the "Exclusives." It is not the purpose of the writer to enter upon the merits of this controversy, upon which many volumes of conflicting statements have been written, and which, so early in their history, divided Brethren into two or three confederacies of assemblies, and thus marred the testimony that had commenced so fairly, and promised a speedy return of many Christians in the denominations to the simplicity of the early Apostolic Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That unhappy division, and the theories which gave rise to it, have been followed by their natural results. The "Exclusive Brethren" are now split up into various factions, having no fellowship with each other, and each claiming to be the only true representation of the Church of God upon earth, and all appearing to be mainly engrossed in the work of making proselytes from the "sects." Considering the number of genuine Christians connected with them, it is remarkable how few of their number are actively engaged in any evangelistic work, either at home or in heathen lands. Amongst "Open Brethren," on the other hand, there are many preachers of the Gospel who have accomplished much aggressive work, both as home workers and foreign missionaries. Many of these have been much blessed in their labours, and have been used as the means of gathering little companies of Christians, who meet simply in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit that prevails in these assemblies depends very much upon the character of the teaching they have had to begin with. If those who were their first instructors in the truth of Scripture were wise, enlightened, and godly men, the meeting will generally manifest the same spirit, unless disturbed by the reception of unruly members, who have been trained in a different school, as is often the case. But there are, unfortunately, some who have gone out as evangelists, apparently more filled with hatred to the denominations, than with love to the souls of the perishing, and more bent upon getting at the adherents of "the sects" than at sinners from the highways and hedges.

It is needless to say that assemblies founded by these preachers usually partake very strongly of the leading characteristics of their founders, who often seem to assume the authority of Old Testament prophets, or New Testament apostles; and the members are generally impatient of any other line of teaching than what they have been accustomed to receive from them. Amongst such assemblies as these it is generally looked upon as a very serious offence for any of their members to go and hear a preacher or teacher connected with the "sects," no matter how godly or gifted he may be, or how much he may be used as a means of blessing to the souls of men; and the one who has the hardihood to offend openly in this way is apt to be regarded as "loose," and not worthy of confidence. In out-of-the-way places, not frequently visited by the travelling evangelist or teacher, such assemblies frequently die a natural death, and in other places they have often been more distinguished by their hostility to the "sects" than by the spiritual power manifest in their meetings. But in these days of conventions, and conferences, and associations, and alliances, and organizations of one kind or another, the "Open Brethren," in some parts of America, have got into a system of holding frequent conventions, now in one neighbourhood, and then in another, attended by many preachers, and addressed by a few of the leading teachers, who thus make up in some degree for the want of Scriptural organization. In these conventions, as a rule, no one formally presides, and there is a profession of leaving the meetings open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as in a worship meeting; but this is often a mere matter of form, as the leaders resent and oppose any teaching on such occasions, no matter how Scriptural it may be, which does not accord with their own peculiar views. It would certainly be a much more straightforward course to appoint a chairman, and announce the speakers and subjects beforehand, than to profess to wait upon God for guidance, while determined to have their own way. By these conventions, however, there seems to be an attempt made to keep together the confederation of assemblies, as a separate part of the professing Church,

instead of an effort to have the various churches or assemblies of believers organized after the model of those in Apostolic times.

Differences of opinion amongst "Open Brethren" have, as in the case of "Exclusive Brethren" brought in division, and, in some places, where both these parties are represented, there are four or five, or perhaps more, meetings, none of which are in fellowship with each other. This is, unhappily, the present condition of affairs amongst Brethren; and it is all mainly traceable to the failures and mistakes of able and godly men, who taught many precious truths, but failed to give sufficient prominence to other truths, which are equally important.

CHAPTER III.

Erroneous Teaching on the Doctrine of Separation.

THE recognition of all true Christians as members of the "One Body," of which Christ is the head, was one of the most important truths proclaimed by the early leaders amongst Brethren, as being clearly taught in Scripture. And the prayer of our Lord "that they all may be one"—"that the world may believe" (John xvii. 21), plainly revealed that a manifested unity of some kind amongst all believers was according to the mind of God. The command to come out from among unbelievers (2 Cor. 6 : 14-18), and the promise connected with obedience to it, made it equally clear that such unity was to be in separation from unbelievers, and from all that is dishonouring to God in the life and walk of the believer. When, in simple faith, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Christians obeyed this command, there was a loving recognition of all others who were members of the "One Body," and, at the same time, a withdrawal from all who were merely nominal Christians; and the

Spirit of God wrought mightily amongst them, and manifested His presence in them as individuals and as assemblies. When, therefore, a true Christian from some Church, in which there was only a very small percentage of saved men and women, mixed with a crowd of the unconverted, and perhaps presided over by an ungodly clergyman, came into such an assembly when they were partaking of the Lord's Supper, and saw no visible head presiding over and directing the worship, it is no wonder that he should desire to change his position as speedily as possible, and take his place with those who had separated from the various denominations around them.

God gives the Holy Spirit "to them that obey Him" (Acts v. 32), and so long as nothing is allowed which would grieve Him, the Spirit's presence will be manifested. And thus it came to pass that the hearts of Christians were united in such a way that a powerful testimony was raised against the nominal Christianity of the day, and, in some places, few were left behind but the unconverted members and ministers. It did seem, for a short time, as if there would soon be a general bringing together of all real Christians, in organized, as well as manifested unity, and it is not to be wondered at that the denominations were alarmed at the exodus of so many of the most earnest Christians from their churches. But Satan would not allow such a movement to go on without opposition. Spiritual pride came in, and Brethren began to speak of the truths which their leaders had been chiefly advocating as "Brethren's truth," and to despise Christians who were still in the denominations. A harsh, dogmatic, and censorious spirit took the place of that loving recognition of all the members of the body of Christ, which had at first characterized those identified with this new movement in the Church of God. "Exclusive Brethren" assumed to be gathered upon the ground of the "One Body," and thus to be the sole representation of the Church of God upon earth, and they severely condemned all Christians who would not come into their circle of fellowship. Rancorous controversies arose between them and the "Open Brethren" in reference

to the true "ground of gathering." The latter denied that there was any such doctrine taught in Scripture as gathering upon the ground of the "One Body," and claimed that the true principle of gathering is "in the Name," and to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. But both parties were united in denouncing the denominations, and in requiring their adherents to have no fellowship with them, in either worship or service to God. The principle laid down by Mr. Darby and other Exclusive teachers, at the time of the rupture with Mr. Newton, with regard to separation from evil, bore its legitimate fruit. Differences of opinion on various points arose amongst themselves. Assemblies were required to "judge the questions" raised, and after decisions had been arrived at, all others in the same confederation of assemblies were called upon to separate from those who would not bow to these decisions. This naturally led to the formation of several confederacies of assemblies amongst the "Exclusive Brethren," each claiming to represent the "One Body" on earth, each maintaining a rigid line of separation from all the other confederacies, and each also insisting upon thorough separation from the "sects," as they call all professing Christians who are not amongst Brethren. The inconsistency of such a position is self-evident.

Nor is the teaching and practice of "Open Brethren" on this subject any more consistent than that of the "Exclusives." They also are divided into various parties in many places, who have no fellowship with each other; but these divisions have mainly been caused by local questions of discipline. Serious differences have also arisen respecting the system of receiving into fellowship at the Lord's Table, which threaten to give rise to splits in their ranks as decided as those amongst the "Exclusives." When Christians first began coming out from the various denominations, to meet simply in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, recognizing the unity of all the members of His body, and the sovereign guidance of the Holy Spirit, the "Open Brethren" gladly welcomed to the Lord's Table all Christians not living in sin or holding evil doctrine, no matter what might be their ecclesi-

astical position. But it was found that many Christians would unite with them in showing the Lord's death in this way who did not feel called upon to sever their denominational connections. In order to compel them to do so a line of teaching was adopted which declared connection with any of the denominations to be disorderly walk, and insisted upon separation from them as a necessary condition of fellowship at the Lord's Table. A rigid system of discipline was established, which prevented any being admitted to break bread without a letter of commendation from some other assembly in the same confederacy, or without being formally proposed and received as a member of the Assembly; which, of course, involved separation from all other ecclesiastical connections as a condition precedent to the privilege of uniting with them in showing the Lord's death at His own table. To such an extent has this principle of separation from supposed ecclesiastical evil been carried in some places that many otherwise intelligent Christians would not dare to attend any undenominational meetings, where addresses were to be delivered by godly ministers and members of various denominations, or even to attend meetings in public halls where D. L. Moody and other evangelists (not amongst Brethren) were preaching the simple Gospel of the grace of God to the unconverted. And all this sectarian bigotry has been practised, and even justified, under the plea of "separation from ecclesiastical evil."

What a sad commentary is all this manifestation of sectarian spirit upon two of the most important principles on which Brethren had originally come out of the different evangelical denominations to gather simply in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! First, that all Christians are members of "one body," of which He is the head; and second, that all sectarianism is sin. Truly, indeed, it is much easier to see the mote which is in our brother's eye than the beam which is in our own eye. It is so easy to drift away from the simple teaching of the Word of God, and persuade ourselves that we are doing Him service when we lay down principles, or adopt rules, that are wholly at variance with His revealed will con-

cerning us and our relationship to Himself, and to other members of His body. Surely it is much worse to cherish a sectarian spirit in an apparently scriptural position than to be in an apparently unscriptural position without the sectarian spirit.

A great deal of the teaching amongst Brethren on the subject of Separation has been from Old Testament Scriptures, which do not warrant the conclusions that have been drawn from them in so far as separation from other Christians is concerned. The Word of God never calls upon Christians to separate from each other except in the way of discipline, and on account of sins which are clearly defined. Where there is flagrant disobedience to God's commands, it is evident that discipline must come in ; but where there are simply differences of judgment as to ecclesiastical position, or the most scriptural modes of Church organization or government, and as to other matters, in regard to which the New Testament Scriptures do not give explicit directions, is it not evident that the exhortation to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" should apply in such cases ? And that forbearance should be exercised towards others who may not see eye to eye with us on these subjects ? It is certainly contrary to the whole tenor of the Holy Spirit's teaching for this dispensation that any true Christian should be hindered from showing the Lord's death at His own table on such grounds as have been stated, and on the plea that the "truth of separation" requires such action.

All truths are important, but all truths are not fundamental, and nothing, except disorderly walk or fundamental error, should be allowed to prevent Christians from worshipping together, and thus manifesting their unity as members of the "One Body." And surely the same rule ought to prevail in reference to their fellowship in the Lord's work. One of the most cheering things in connection with foreign missions is the way in which sectarian bigotry is broken down amongst truly consecrated missionaries sent out by various denominations and those not connected with any denomination. It is really delightful to hear of conventions in

heathen lands, where all these labourers come together, not to talk about minor questions on which they may differ, but to pray for one another, and to encourage each other in the great work to which their lives have been devoted. When acting in this manner towards each other they are really "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," and are thus manifesting the unity of the "One Body" to which they all belong. In their conflict with the powers of darkness in heathen lands they find it necessary to present an unbroken front to the common enemy, and to live in separation from the evils around them. And is not this just a picture of the kind of separation required of every truly consecrated Christian in so-called Christian countries, where there is so much need for the exhortation to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" with all who are really born of God, from whom we are not commanded to separate in discipline, but who may differ from us in judgment about many subjects that are not fundamental doctrines of the Word.

The great trouble is, however, that in Christendom there are so few of those professing to be Christians who have been really born of God, and that so few of those born of God are really consecrated Christians, filled with the Holy Spirit, who want God to guide in all their affairs, and have His own way with them in everything. In many of the denominational churches the great majority of the members are as unconverted as any other heathens, and make no profession of conversion; or, if some of these do profess to have been converted, it was probably in consequence of transitory emotion once experienced under some sensational preacher, who asked them to stand up or raise their hands as a sign that they had determined to become Christians; and so they "joined the Church," and, as their deportment is outwardly decent, they are regarded as Christians, although still without life in Christ, on their way to a lost sinner's doom, and eating and drinking judgment to themselves every time they sit down at the Lord's Table. In the same churches may be a good many true Christians, "unequally yoked together" with the unconverted, and but few of whom, if any, know anything about what consecration really means.

In assemblies of Brethren, on the other hand, all members profess to be really Christians; but if we may judge by the spirit they manifest, there is too much reason to believe that many also amongst them have never experienced the new birth, although they may give chapter and verse for their conversion without the slightest hesitation. The fact is, that for many years past more attention seems to have been given by their teachers generally to the letter of the Word, in order to establish their theories about separation from supposed ecclesiastical evil than to the edification of believers, who should be taught that without entire consecration there can be no true separation to God, which shall be glorifying to Him and a means of blessing to the Church and the world.

CHAPTER IV.

Want of Scriptural Order in Many Assemblies of Brethren.

THE natural tendency of man is to go to extremes in one way or another; and each successive step in the development of scriptural truth in modern times has been marked by the extravagances of its advocates, who, on beholding any particular phase of error, have swayed like the pendulum to an opposite extreme. Many who professed, like Luther, to believe in the doctrine of "justification by faith," drifted into the heresy of antinomianism; and many, through fear of antinomianism, were led to the opposite extreme of denying the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone. The reliance by many professors upon ordinances as a means of salvation seems to have led the Friends to discard altogether the ordinances appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ. The early advocacy of the pre-millennial coming of Christ was marked by the extravagances of the Millerites and others.

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which brought discredit upon a very precious and clearly-revealed truth. And so has it been with many of the principles at first advocated by Brethren. The plain teaching of the Word of God in reference to the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 5 : 9) showed the absurdity of appointing unconverted ministers and elders to official positions in the professing Church; and the teaching of the same word in reference to the Holy Spirit's guidance in the assembly through whom He will (1 Cor. 12 : 14), clearly demonstrated that it was wrong to place any barrier in the way of the Holy Spirit's operations in meetings for worship through any members whom He might see fit to use. Whenever, therefore, Christians were gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in real subjection to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the promises of God were fulfilled, and there was a wonderful experience of liberty and power in the meetings. But this, in turn, fostered spiritual pride in many cases, and Brethren began to speak contemptuously of "one man ministry," and of all ordained office-bearers "in the sects," whether converted or not, as if they were guilty of some heinous sin by remaining in the position where they conscientiously believed that God had placed them. Whilst recognizing, more or less fully, the gifts that God had been using in their own meetings, they seemed to forget that, without the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, these gifts might, as at Corinth, prove a snare to the possessors of them instead of a blessing to the Church of God. Young men having the evangelistic gift were encouraged to devote themselves to evangelistic work, and in large numbers engaged in this way in the Lord's service. It was soon apparent that most of the open-air preaching in summer, as well as the in-door work in halls, was being carried on by those associated with Brethren. This was the means of largely increasing the numbers in fellowship in their meetings. But the increase of numbers only brought out into bolder relief the lack of scriptural order in most of their assemblies. While gifts were recognized, official position in the Church of God was by many Brethren publicly derided; and some preachers, indeed, went so far as to say that God

never intended that elders should be appointed except by apostles or those directly commissioned by them to do this work, as were Timothy and Titus. They seemed to think that this part of the example of the Apostolic Church was not to be followed by Christians, because no special command has been given for the appointment of elders throughout this dispensation. And, in so thinking, they ignored the fact that, instead of a code of rules and regulations for the government of the Church, there is given in the New Testament Scriptures a Divine Model, and each individual believer has dwelling within him the Divine Person of the Holy Spirit, who enabled the apostles and Timothy and Titus to select and ordain the proper persons to act as officers of each Church in the capacity of elders and deacons. Sometimes the case of Diotrophes is mentioned (3 John 9, 10) as showing that possibly the wrong kind of men might be appointed to office, which is, in effect, saying that it would be dangerous in this respect to follow the example of the primitive Churches. Those appointed at that time to offices in the various assemblies of Christians were doubtless men compassed with infirmities, and liable to fail in the same manner as men at the present day; but that did not lead any Church that we read of to question the propriety of appointing such office-bearers. Certainly no such thought seemed to enter the mind of Paul, who sent from Miletus to Ephesus, and called, not the whole assembly or the gifted brethren, but the elders, who, in their official capacity, represented the whole Church at Ephesus (Acts 20 : 17-38); and addressing them, he commended them to God and to the Word of His grace as sufficient to build them up, etc., declaring at the same time that it was the Holy Ghost who had made them overseers, and commanding them to feed the Church of God, which He had purchased with His own blood. He also warned them against "grievous wolves," which should afterwards enter in amongst them. But he never intimated that when that should happen the appointment of elders in the Church should cease.

One source of opposition to the appointment of elders is the disorderly and self-willed element, which, in many meet-

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ings, has great influence, and frequently turns the liberty of the Spirit into license for the flesh. In other words, the democratic spirit, so prevalent at the present day, brooks no restraint, and claims that every one has as much right to speak as another, forgetting that no one has any right to speak except as the Holy Spirit guides, and that God has chosen that elders should be appointed who, under the Spirit's guidance, should feed the Church of God, and see that everything is done decently and in order.

Another source of opposition to the appointment of elders is the fear on the part of some evangelists and teachers that their own influence in some assemblies might thereby be diminished, although very few would be willing to admit that such a motive would be allowed to bias their teaching on this subject.

The excuses made for the non-appointment and non-recognition of elders are often very absurd, and there seems to be a fear to speak of any one as an elder lest some serious mistake should have been made in the appointment or recognition of the person referred to. Paul spoke of the Cretans being described by one of themselves as "always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies" (Tit. 1 : 12); and yet he left Titus in Crete with the express command to ordain elders in every city (Tit. 1 : 5). If in that island, where the natural characters of the people were as he described, it was safe to appoint elders "in every city," under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, surely it must be safe anywhere, in any assembly of Christians, under the same guidance, also to appoint elders and deacons to take oversight amongst the children of God.

The substitutes for eldership in some meetings are as ridiculous as the excuses offered for the non-appointment of elders. Sometimes, when any matter of importance is to be considered, all the "Brethren" will be asked to meet and talk it over, the only distinction made being that of sex, all the males in the assembly, young and old, being consulted, and the females being entirely shut out. It would be difficult to say where the scriptural authority for such a practice as this can be found, except in the perversion of the command that a

woman should not speak in the Church. In other assemblies all the women are allowed to be present, as well as all the men, when business matters are discussed. In fact, it is almost incredible how many expedients are adopted in preference to the simple plan that God has shown in His own Word, and in the example of the Apostolic Church.

It is quite true that there are many assemblies, chiefly in the Mother Country, such as the Bethesda meeting at Bristol, where Mr. Muller, Mr. Groves, Mr. Wright and others have been for many years fully recognized as elders, and in which there are scriptural rule and order under the Holy Spirit's guidance. But such assemblies as these, it is to be feared, are exceptional. As a general rule there is neither definite appointment nor distinct recognition of either elders or deacons, and the consequence is that in most places there is more or less confusion and the lack of that proper organization which is necessary for aggressive work in the Lord's service.

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CHAPTER V.

Mistaken Views as to the Church's Present Position in the World.

THERE has been much discussion amongst Brethren about the true ground of gathering and the place of worship. The "Exclusives" claim to meet as members of the "One Body," thus manifesting its unity. The "Open Brethren" maintain that the true principle of meeting is as those gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Both these parties and their various sub-divisions appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures, and profess to find in them much typical teaching concerning the positions which they assume; but very much of this teaching has been erroneous, and much of it very far-fetched, to say the least, as professing to show God's purpose concerning His Church in this dispensation. It is quite true that the body of Christ is one, and that there is a manifestation of the unity of that "One Body" wherever a company of believers is gathered to "show the Lord's death until He come." And it is also quite true that wherever two or three are gathered in His name, whether in a prayer meeting, or to break bread, or to read the Word, or to engage in His service, there He is in the midst, according to His own promise (Matt. 18 : 20). But none of the Scriptures quoted in support of these truths justify the claim sometimes made by Brethren to be themselves the only true manifestation of the Church of God on earth. Nor is there any good ground for supposing that it was His purpose that there should ever be uniformity, either with or without organization, in that manifestation of unity for which the Lord Jesus Christ prayed in John 17 : 21.

The remarkable omission from the New Testament Scriptures of any specific rules for Church organization clearly shows that God never intended that much importance should

be attached to mere outward uniformity in the assemblies of His saints. The discourse of the Lord Himself with the woman at the well of Sychar proves that a new order of things was about to be introduced, in which the place and form of worship were to be of little consequence; and the all-important requisite was to be worship "in spirit and in truth." Whilst He Himself, as a Jew, fulfilled all righteousness, and yielded implicit obedience to all the demands of the Mosaic ritual, He taught His disciples to look forward to something infinitely more glorious than the earthly worship to which they had been accustomed. With the descent of the promised Comforter, all believers were baptized into one body; and not only so, but each individual member of that body became a temple of the Holy Spirit, and thus privileged and commanded to enter into the holiest of all, in the heavenly tabernacle, and worship God in spirit and in truth. And after His resurrection, when commanding them to go forth as His witnesses, it was with the assurance that all power was given unto Him in heaven and on earth, and that He would be with them always, even unto the end of the age.

In the Acts of the Apostles we have examples of worship and service in the Apostolic Church without any express commands to follow the examples thus set; and in the epistles many principles are laid down for our guidance in the house of God, and in our relations to each other and to the world, with mention of different officials then appointed and recognized in the Churches, but no specific directions as to the form, manner or place of meeting on earth.

Why this silence in Scripture upon subjects which men now deem of so much importance? Is it not because of the fact that there is a Divine Person in the Church, and in the individual believer, whose wisdom is sufficient for every emergency? And if He is grieved or slighted, it matters not how correct may be the outward forms and ceremonies as compared with the scriptural model, there must be an utter lack of spiritual power for either worship or service. But, on the other hand, in whatever ecclesiastical position a child of God may be, if he fully yields himself up to be guided and taught

by the indwelling Comforter, he will experience the presence and power of God, and be enabled to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

It is, indeed, strange that many gifted and godly teachers amongst Brethren should seem in any measure practically to overlook a fact which, as a matter of doctrine, they all admit, namely, that the children of God in this dispensation are a heavenly people, "raised and seated with Christ in heavenly places," with a "heavenly calling" and a "heavenly citizenship," and with one place of worship, which is the "true tabernacle," "the heavenly Jerusalem," where it is their privilege to enter "into the holiest," and render unto God that worship in spirit and in truth, which is the distinguishing feature of this dispensation. The building which God is now erecting upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, composed of living stones, fitly framed together for an habitation of God through the Spirit, is growing unto an holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 11 : 20-22). The Church, as a whole, is His temple, and the body of each individual believer is also His temple, where He dwells, and may be reverently worshipped. In this aspect of the Church every believer is shown as perfect and complete in Christ, taken out of the world by the Father and given to the Son, and left here as His witnesses, indwelt by the Holy Spirit as He was; and with His prayer on their behalf to the Father "that they all may be one : as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they all may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me," etc. From this prayer it is clearly the Lord's desire that there should be a manifested unity of some kind amongst all who are truly children of God.

But in the second and third chapters of Revelation is given the earthly aspect of the Church during this entire dispensation in the addresses to the seven Churches of Asia. In this connection it is worthy of notice that God always recognizes the professing Church in the world (or Christendom) as one, notwithstanding all its failures and divisions in His eyes and in the eyes of men. None of the sins for which His Church is rebuked seem to apply to the manner or the place of earthly

worship. In each address, all that is right is commended, evil doers are threatened with impending judgment, and the overcomers are promised rewards for faithfulness in life, and testimony, and service. He who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, and whose eyes are as a flame of fire, sees all that is going on. But the day of grace has not yet ended ; the time for judgment has not arrived ; and it is only when the mystic Babylon is about to be destroyed that the command issues, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues".

"Do you then mean to say," it may be asked, "that Christians should remain connected with things which they see to be dishonouring to God, and contrary to the teaching of His Word?" Certainly not ; but God has nowhere commanded Brethren, or any one else, to try and restore the Church to the same condition in which it stood as a united testimony, immediately after Pentecost, and it is folly to attempt such a restoration, more especially without the experience of the Pentecostal fire, and the Pentecostal power. As a matter of fact, we know on the sure testimony of the Word of God, that no such restoration will take place. The earthly testimony of Christians, as a united organization, to the unity of the body, has been irretrievably ruined, if it ever really existed. God is now dealing with individuals, and in the present Laodicean condition of the Church, the Lord Himself speaks to every Christian, saying : "Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." Although bodily present in heaven as our great High Priest, He, by His Spirit, now knocks at the door of each heart, and seeks admission, that He may dwell there in all His fulness, and that there may be communion with Himself, and with all others who have thus opened the doors of their hearts to Him. The exhortation to each obedient one, who thus allows Him to come in and take full possession, is, as it was to the Christians at Ephesus, to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness

and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," and it is added, "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph. iv. 1-6.)

Christians are each individually bound to obey the commands given to them in the Word, and to observe the principles therein laid down, in their intercourse with the world, and with one another. Individually they should rejoice in the fact that all believers are members of the "One Body," of which Christ is the head, and act towards others as if they believed this to be really true. Individually, they should avoid the unequal yoke with the unconverted, and separate from everything that Scripture condemns. Individually, they should abstain from all sectarianism, in either form or spirit, and regard the Word of God as the last Court of Appeal in every controversy. Individually, there should be distinct recognition of the presence of the Holy Spirit in every meeting for worship, and submission to His guidance, with abhorrence of clerisy in every shape and form. And, individually, there should be constant waiting for the Son of God from heaven. On receiving these truths, Brethren originally came out of various denominations, and gathered simply as Christians, in the Name of Jesus. But they had no right to charge others with disobedience, to whom the same truths had not been revealed ; and they had no monopoly of all Scripture truth, and, therefore, should be willing to learn other truths, that the Spirit has been revealing in the Word, through different instruments, more especially as to His own presence and power as the indwelling Comforter, promised by the Son, and sent down by the Father, to dwell as a living, Divine Person, in the heart of each believer. Only as this wondrous truth is believed and realized, will there be the experience of holy lives and effective service ; and only thus will God receive that worship in spirit and in truth, which He is seeking.

Whilst, however, there is individual responsibility to

receive and hold fast every truth that has really been learned from the Word of God, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, there is no warrant whatever in Scripture for attacking the various forms of Church worship and organization, denouncing all who may not see eye to eye with us, and attempting to bring about a restoration of the Church as a whole, to a partial likeness of the Church in the Apostolic Age. Why should Brethren blame denominational Christians for not recognizing the priesthood of all believers, whilst they neglect the appointment or recognition of elders and deacons? Why complain of sectarianism amongst the denominations, when there are so many sects amongst themselves? Why find fault with others for not meeting in the same manner as themselves, if there is no real consecration and filling of the Spirit, through whom alone there can be worship in spirit and in truth?

No organic unity of the Church as a testimony to the world can possibly take place during this dispensation, and God has not commanded it. As a matter of fact, the very contrary has been predicted in the prophetic Word, whilst He who sees all the confusion that exists, recognizes the professing Church as one in Rev. ii. and iii., and judges each person in it individually.

But there is a manifestation of unity which God has commanded, and for which every member of the body of Christ is responsible; and that is to "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" with all other members. If this exhortation be obeyed by each member of the "One Body," whatever may be his ecclesiastical position, God will be glorified, and the world will be forced to confess that the Father sent the Son.

We are never exhorted to keep the unity of the body. God takes care of that. But the unity of the Spirit can only be properly kept by the surrender of our whole being to His indwelling presence and power, and allowing Him to take supreme control of our lives and actions. This will ever lead us to act in love to all who are members of the "One Body," in spite of differences in judgment upon many minor ques-

tions. This is apparent in newly converted persons, when the Spirit has first revealed Christ to them as their Saviour ; and it is also very apparent in those who have been filled with the Spirit after conversion. But those Christians who know nothing of this latter experience, however intelligent they may be naturally, are apt to assume that the unity of the body and the unity of the Spirit are identical, which is not the case. Every Christian should seek the filling of the Holy Spirit, in whose power alone he may successfully "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" with all other true Christians.

CHAPTER VI.

Undue Prominence Given to One Ordinance.

IT is safe to say that Brethren have attached more importance to the "breaking of bread" in their own circle of fellowship than the plain teaching of Scripture warrants. That the remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His own appointed way, in this ordinance, is a precious privilege, and an occasion which always leads to true spiritual worship by those in communion with God, is undoubtedly true. There is no command, however, as to the frequency with which we are to partake of the Lord's Supper; but the assurance is given, that as often as we do this, we "shew the Lord's death till He come," and it is assumed that those who love Him, and are waiting for His coming, will want to remember Him as frequently as possible. But the simple statement in Acts xx. 7, that "upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them," is surely not a sufficient reason for laying down a positive rule, that every Christian ought to partake of the Lord's Supper on each first day of the week. Where no command is given as to how often they should partake

of this ordinance, no Christians should be condemned for disobedience, because they have neglected a privilege, which can only be enjoyed by the loving and watchful ones, who are longing for their Lord's return. These only can, with grateful hearts, praise Him for His atoning sacrifice, and feast upon Himself, as they partake of the symbols of His dying love.

To allow such a privilege as this to become a mere formal observance, which must be attended to every Lord's Day, on pain of incurring the guilt of disobedience, is certainly wrong. And it is equally wrong for any assembly, or confederation of assemblies, to claim that they are exclusively in possession of "the Lord's Table." It is well ever to remember that, as an organized and united testimony on earth, the "Church of God" is in ruins, and that "the Lord's Table" is only once mentioned in the Scriptures, and then it is in contra-distinction to the "table of devils." Unless, therefore, we are prepared to assert that other Christians, not in our circle of fellowship, are partaking of "the table of devils," it is the grossest kind of presumption to say that they are not partaking of "the Lord's Table." The Lord's Table is that at which He is Himself present, and He has promised to be wherever two or three are gathered in His Name. But this promise does not apply only to the Lord's Table, as some appear to think. It is equally true of every meeting for prayer, or praise, or reading the Word, or service where Christians are gathered in His Name; and the mere fact of any Christians belonging to some denomination, does not prevent their being gathered in the Name of Jesus. It is wrong for Brethren to assume that, because they do not take any denominational name, they are, therefore, the only Christians who can be gathered in His Name. And there is no reason whatever to suppose that this promise of the Lord to His disciples was ever intended to form a basis of separation from other Christians. As a matter of fact, the promise is given specially in connection with the assurance of answers to united prayer. (See Matt. xviii. 19, 20.)

When Brethren first began to meet in this simple manner, it was in a spirit of love to all who were members of the "One Body," and with distinct recognition of the presence, and submission to the sovereign guidance of the Holy Spirit ; and there was a marvellous experience of liberty and power in their meetings, when assembled for the purpose of remembering the Lord Jesus Christ in the "breaking of bread."

But now, it is to be feared that in most places, similar meetings are attended in a sectarian spirit of division from other Christians, and often with little or no recognition of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. And, as a matter of course, such meetings are dull and listless, very few of those present being in a condition to lead in worship, and many others taking part because they had attended from a sense of duty, and, as they supposed, in obedience to some command, which required their attendance at this ordinance on the first day of every week. Such formal appearance of worship should never be exacted from any one. Far better would it be if only those attended who, being in communion with God, regarded it as a privilege, and were really subject to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and thus able to worship in spirit and in truth.

CHAPTER VII.

Attitude of Brethren towards Ministers.

CONTEMPORANEOUSLY with the testimony of Brethren, there has been great revival of spiritual life in many Christians connected with the various evangelical denominations ; and many gifted and godly ministers have preached the Gospel of the grace of God with clearness and power, and have, at the same time, proclaimed the Lord's Second Coming as the great hope of the Church. We are familiar with the names of many such servants of God, who have been greatly used in the conversion of sinners and edification of saints. No Brethren ever preached the Gospel with greater clearness than the late Charles H. Spurgeon, Baptist minister in London ; and none of them proclaimed the Pre-millennial Coming of Christ with more earnestness than Horatius and Andrew Bonar, the Scotch Presbyterian clergymen. And yet these men, and many others like them, did not feel called upon to leave the positions in which they believed that God had placed them, and was using them. And whilst Brethren were judging their various questions, and separating one from another, into many different confederacies of assemblies, each claiming to be the only true representation of the Church of God on earth, these godly men have been laying aside their sectarian prejudices, and learning to recognize more fully their oneness with all other true Christians, as members of the body of Christ. Continuing to hold their differences in judgment, as to the best modes of Church organization and government while in this world, many of them have been "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. By this means, those who are really spiritual in each denomination, are being

drawn more closely together. The result has been, that of late years, conventions have been held for the deepening of spiritual life, attended by Christians of all denominations, and of no denomination. At these gatherings there is no discussion of their petty differences of opinion as to Church order or government, the great objects aimed at being to promote a fuller consecration to God by each individual Christian, and to seek the filling of the Holy Spirit for worship, and service, and daily life.

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It is to be deplored that, as a general rule, Brethren hold aloof from such meetings of Christians, which are certainly a manifestation of unity that God has approved, if we may judge by the blessing received at such gatherings. If they could only be induced to attend these meetings, and lay aside their long-cherished prejudices, they would find that there is much important truth which they have overlooked, whilst so much occupied with criticizing and condemning all who do not see, eye to eye, with themselves, in reference to Church position, etc. They would find, moreover, that while there is still a great deal of Nicolaitanism or clerisy in the Church of God upon earth, there are also many truly humble and devoted servants of God in the position of ministers of various denominations, who are doing the Lord's work with a single eye to His glory, and about whom there is not a particle of clerisy, which leads men arbitrarily to over-ride the people of God. As a matter of fact, they would probably be forced to confess that there are those taking the place of teachers amongst themselves who evince more of the spirit of clerisy over the consciences of Christians than many whom they condemn because "Rev." is prefixed to their names.

The way in which many Brethren speak about godly ministers is really very absurd. They sometimes charge them with usurping one of the titles of the Almighty in allowing the word "Reverend" to be attached to their names, apparently forgetting that this word is used only once in Scripture, and then as an adjective, which should apply truthfully to every child of God engaged in His

service, if they were living as they ought. The very fact that this word has come into general use, as a matter of form, to designate people taking a leading part in religious work, proves that there is no intention, in using that word, to apply one of the titles of the Deity to any human being, as has been often asserted.

Another term of reproach, often ignorantly applied by some Brethren to godly ministers, is that of "hireling." It is quite true that there are many men to whose name the prefix "Rev." is applied who were never called of God to the work of the ministry in His Church, who have gone into that position as a profession, and continue in it solely for the salaries they receive from their fellow-men. These men are hirelings, pure and simple, and have no business to be in such a position at all. Much better would it be for themselves, and for those to whom, as blind leaders of the blind, they profess to minister, if they were driving the plough, or following some other occupation for an honest living. But it is positively wicked to class with such men those who have been really called of God to minister in holy things, and whom He is using for His own glory, because they receive a regular income for the support of themselves and their families, and are thus freed from care about temporal things in order that they may more fully give themselves up to the Lord's service.

It is sometimes said that these men have no right to be in that position; that there is no such thing as "one man ministry" to be found in the Word of God. Those who speak in this way have failed to notice that in His addresses to the Seven Churches of Asia, in Rev. ii. and iii., the Lord Jesus Christ singles out one person, to whom He speaks as the Angel or Messenger of each Church, instead of addressing each Church collectively. We may, therefore, conclude that the one so addressed occupied a representative position, which, in this respect, was "one man ministry," although there were doubtless many others in the Church who were filling different offices, and exercising various gifts. How much better would it be, frequently, in meetings of Brethren.

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if there was "one man" ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the edification of the Church, than to listen to half a dozen, without any spiritual power, assuming to exercise gifts which they do not possess.

It is high time for Brethren to cease speaking evil of those who are not only children of God, but servants whom He is honouring and using, and to seek to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" with all such. If they fail to do this, the Holy Spirit will be grieved, as He has been already, and they will not only cease to be used by Him in the conversion of sinners, but the whole movement with which they are identified, and which once promised so fairly as a means of blessing to the Church, will prove a standing monument to the folly of men who try to bring about a manifestation of unity in the Church by building walls of separation from their brethren, and indulging a sectarian spirit towards all who do not submit to their dictation.

CHAPTER VIII.

Holiness People.

It is generally admitted by Christians who are looking for the Lord's Second Coming that we are in the "last days," immediately preceding the end of this dispensation. And yet it is strange that many who thus believe should fail to observe the signs of the times, now being made manifest in fulfilment of the prophetic Word: more especially in reference to the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days upon all flesh before the great and terrible day of the Lord come (Joel ii. 28-31). Never before, since Pentecost, has there been a time in the history of the Church when so many true Christians have been seeking the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, in all His fullness, for holiness of life and power in

service. The "Holiness Movement" has been a very prominent feature in the religious history of the last half of the present century. It has been marked by extravagances as ludicrous as those that attended the first promulgation of the Lord's Second Coming, and by most humiliating failures in the cases of some who professed to have enjoyed the experience of perfect deliverance from all sin in their lives.

When Brethren and some teachers in the denominations first proclaimed the Lord's Second or Pre-millennial Coming, they encountered a storm of opposition from all evangelical Churches. But, as this truth became known, it was the means of a great revival of spiritual life. There seemed to be, as in the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. xxv. 1-13), a going "forth to meet the bridegroom" on the part of those who professed to believe that His coming was imminent, and this was evidenced by earnestness in preaching the Gospel, and increased zeal in the work of foreign missions. As is usually the case, however, with every movement that is really of God, Satan tried to hinder, through the failures and absurdities of many who professed to believe this truth, but who, through ignorance of the Word, and trying to be wise beyond what is written, fell into the error of fixing dates for the Lord's Coming, only to be disappointed, and bring ridicule upon themselves, and upon the truth they seemed so anxious to make known. But, as the mists of error have by degrees been swept away, the truth itself has come out brighter and clearer, until now there are very few really earnest and spiritual-minded men, taking a lead in Christian work in the evangelical Churches, but regard the Pre-millennial Coming of the Lord as the great hope of the Church, and the greatest incentive to Christian life and service. As the years have gone by, however, this truth has, to many who really believe it, lost its freshness and power; and of the professing Church as a whole, it may be said to-day, as it was said of the ten virgins who went forth to meet the bridegroom, that "while He tarried they all slumbered and slept," both the wise and the foolish. Some have only a profession that they believe the Gospel, and perhaps they can

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give chapter and verse for their conversion, but they have never received the Holy Spirit ; the midnight cry finds them unprepared ; they are shut out from the marriage feast ; and the Lord Himself says to them, " I know you not." But those who have received the Holy Spirit, of whom the oil is the symbol, go in with Him ; they are ready. And so it would seem that in the " Holiness Movement " there is the call to each individual Christian to be prepared for His Coming at any moment, by receiving the Holy Spirit in all His fullness, and thus setting at rest all doubt that might arise as to their readiness to meet the Bridegroom. The question is now being put to every one who professes to be a Christian, " Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed ?" (Acts xix. 2); or " Did you receive the Holy Ghost when you believed ?" (Rev. Ver.) It is not enough that you should have a clear knowledge of Scriptural truth respecting the way of salvation, and profess to trust in Jesus as your Saviour. There must also be a definite receiving of the Holy Spirit, either at conversion, or afterwards, or you are not prepared for the Coming of the Lord. And the best proof that can be given that the Holy Spirit has been received is a holy life, resulting from His indwelling presence, and manifested by the fruit of the Spirit in the daily walk, rather than by the testimony of the lips; although that, too, will not be wanting. If there are Christians in any ecclesiastical position who are conscious that they are not in such a condition of soul as would lead them to hail with joy the Lord's Coming at any moment, let them go to God at once, in lowly contrition of heart, and, self-judged and self-emptied, seek, in full consecration, to be filled with the Spirit, and they will find that in their cases the Master's promise will be fulfilled, " If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him ?" (Luke xi. 13).

Thousands of professing Christians, dissatisfied with their past spiritual experiences, have thus come to God in deep self-abasement, and received in answer to the prayer of

faith, not simply a blessing, but the abiding presence of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself by His Holy Spirit, and have been enabled thenceforth to enter upon an experience of victory over sin in their daily lives, such as they never knew before ; and of power in witnessing for Christ, to which they had heretofore been strangers. Many have entered upon this experience by simple faith, whose knowledge of Scriptural truth was very defective, and these have formed Holiness Associations, and held holiness meetings, and endeavoured by every means in their power, to lead others into the enjoyment of the same happy liberty which they had experienced. And in some places their labours have been attended with much blessing to Christians. These became generally known as "Holiness People." But it was not long before Satan succeeded in leading many of them into serious errors, which have been a positive hindrance to the reception by others of the very truths which had been the means of so much blessing to themselves.

Amongst the "Holiness People," as they are called, there are many earnest Christians, a large proportion of whom were mere nominal professors and church members, who had never really been born of God, until, being dissatisfied with their experience, in their search after "holiness," they found Christ as their Saviour, and with the peace and joy of conversion, obtained deliverance from the power of indwelling sin. Others, who were really Christians in a backsliding state, have come to God as returning prodigals, confessing their failures and yielding themselves up to Him, in simple faith, for cleansing and filling by the Holy Spirit—have experienced restoration of soul, and happy deliverance from the working of the evil nature within. In both these cases the experiences enjoyed were very real and very blessed, and so long as the subjects of them continued to walk by faith and abide in Christ, the Spirit of Christ did indeed make them free from the law of sin and death, and sin did not have dominion over them. But, through one-sided views of truth, and want of sound scriptural teaching, a very large proportion of these people declare that "all the roots of sin have

been taken right out of them," and that, for a longer or shorter time, they have lived entirely without sin. By such testimonies as these, they seem to think that they are glorifying God ; but the levity that is frequently indulged in at their meetings makes it hard for sober-minded Christians to estimate how much of the excitement witnessed may be mere animal emotionalism, and how much may proceed from the direct working of the Holy Spirit. The temptation in such meetings to make extravagant statements in reference to one's own personal experiences is very marked, and the self-deception practised in many cases is appalling. Those who question the reality of testimonies given, or the Scriptural soundness of theories advanced, are at once set down as not having entered upon the experience of "death to self and sin," which the others boast of enjoying. The tendency of professing to have attained a condition of sinless perfection is to glorify self, and lower the standard of God's holiness to the level of the Christian's performances. That which other Christians, who have been better instructed in the teaching of the Word of God, would feel compelled to confess as *sins* in themselves, some of these people will only speak of as *mistakes* when committed by them, and thus the conscience becomes seared, while the profession of "sinless perfection" is kept up, in the face of the most positive evidence that it is only a delusion. And yet, notwithstanding all the ignorance and all the error frequently found in connection with "holiness meetings" and "holiness teachers," there has been a distinct recognition of the need of yielding one's self to God, to be emptied, and cleansed, and filled with the Holy Spirit ; and just in proportion as these blessings have been apprehended by faith, the power of the Holy Spirit has been experienced in life and service.

Many of the "holiness teachers," whilst objecting to any criticism of their theories, are most unsparing in their criticism of other Christians and their doctrines. Denying the doctrine of the two natures, existing at the same time in one responsible person, and professing to have enjoyed for years an experience of actual "death to self and sin," they

yet show themselves to be most keenly alive to anything that affects their own peculiar teaching and experiences, and often vindictively attack those who do not submit to their dictation. In some cases men professing to have attained perfect freedom from sin have been known to use means to accomplish their own ends to which no honourable man of the world would stoop, and yet they have continued to testify that "all the sin had been taken right out of them," and to declare that such failings as had been referred to were only "mistakes." Sometimes, indeed, it would seem by their testimonies, as if many of these people did not regard as sin anything but the gross indulgence of sensual appetites, or ungovernable temper, forgetting that "the thought of foolishness is sin" (Prov. xxiv. 9), that "whatsoever is not of faith, is sin" (Rom. xiv. 23), and that the Christian is not only washed once for all, and made "clean every whit," but that he also needs the daily cleansing from defilement, contracted in his daily walk. It is not too much to say, that any system of teaching that hinders honest confession of sin to God, or to a brother or sister sinned against, is most pernicious in its effects. God declares that He "dwells with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." If, therefore, a Christian has failed, and instead of being humbled before God, continues to rise in meetings, and flippantly talk about having "died to sin" some years before, as a matter of personal experience, and never having sinned since, his own conscience becomes seared, and he proves himself to be a stumbling-block to others.

Much worse, however, than the misleading testimonies of "Holiness People" is the positive errors into which many of them have fallen with regard to fundamental truth. Some of them declare that they no longer need the Bible, because they have the Holy Ghost dwelling within them; and others have gone into much more serious errors in reference to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, indeed, it is not to be wondered at that they should thus be led astray, as most of them seem to study the Word of God very little, and generally know nothing of dispensational truth.

But, in spite of all the failures and mistakes, and positive errors of the "Holiness People," God has been impressing deeply on the hearts of His children that they need something more than the new nature, and the written Word, with which "Brethren" have generally been so familiar; and that is, the living power of the Holy Spirit, who, as the author of the Word, can alone interpret to them its deep spiritual meaning, and endue them with power for service to God, as they surrender their wills to His in full consecration, and allow Him to dwell in their hearts in all His fullness.

That there is a sense in which every child of God receives the Holy Spirit at conversion, and is baptized by the One Spirit into the "One Body," is undoubtedly true (1 Cor. xii. 13), and that some Christians have, at conversion, been entirely consecrated, and filled with the Spirit, may also be true; but in the lives of God's most honoured servants, there has generally been an after-experience, sooner or later, when there was a definite, intelligent surrender of the whole being, and a receiving of the enduement of power from on high, by the filling of the Holy Spirit. The work was God's from first to last, as fully as the conversion of a lost sinner, and the consciousness has remained of a fuller and deeper acquaintance with a Divine Person, dwelling in the heart, whose voice is heard not only through the Word, but also in the inmost recesses of the Christian's own spiritual being.

One of the most remarkable outcomes of the "Holiness Movement" is the Salvation Army, than which nothing could well be much more at variance with the leading principles on which Brethren had separated from the different denominations. The founder of this sect, William Booth, was a Methodist evangelist, with great zeal, a naturally very strong will, and a devoted and gifted wife. Both he and his wife were deeply impressed with the necessity of entire consecration, and the enduement of power by the Holy Spirit for the conversion of sinners, and to this they evidently attached more importance than to a clear knowledge of the letter of the Word, or the doctrines contained in it. Disregarding all ordinances of the Lord's own appoint-

ment, and all Scriptural examples of church organization and government, and apparently not paying much attention to doctrines contained in the Word of God beyond such simple statements as "God is love," and "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," he formed an organization, modelled after the British army, with himself as Commander-in-Chief, and his sons and daughters as Generals or Commissioners under him, for the purpose of reaching the lowest classes of sinners in the highways and hedges, and in the slums of great cities. By insisting upon entire consecration on the part of all subordinate officers, and entire dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit for conversions, he has succeeded in enlisting the services of many thousands of men and women, on an equal footing, as workers, who, in conscious weakness, are depending upon the forth-putting of almighty power by the Holy Spirit; and many thousands of sinners, from the very dregs of society, have been converted to God through their instrumentality. Apparently sent forth as the servants in the parable, at the end of the Gospel feast, to compel those in the highways and hedges to come in, this anomalous organization now encircles the globe. Without any pretensions to faith in God for means to carry on their aggressive warfare against the powers of darkness, and whilst exercising self-denial as to their own personal comfort, they are everywhere known as the most persistent beggars for the work in which they are engaged. Although much persecuted at first, they are now generally becoming popular, as a recognized agency for relieving the destitute and reforming the depraved. Their lively music and short addresses attract to their meetings crowds, who would not listen to long expositions of doctrinal truth. Jesus is lifted up, and the Holy Spirit does the work which He has been asked and expected to do in the salvation of the lost. Their military discipline and titles, their holiness meetings, and their persistent begging for money from converted and unconverted alike; the genuine earnestness and self-denial of many of their members, and their total disregard for all of God's appointed ordinances, make a strange mixture, and furnish

another proof, if such is needed, that the place and form of worship, in this dispensation, is not of so much importance as worship in spirit and in truth, which can only be given by those who are indwelt and controlled by the Holy Spirit. Whilst outside of all the denominations, the Salvation Army is not antagonistic to them, and does not engage in the work of proselytism, and hence it does not, like the Brethren, incur their enmity.

CHAPTER IX.

Sound Doctrine in Connection with the Holiness Movement.

THE testimonies, both of "Brethren" and "Holiness People," to very precious truths, have been sadly marred by human failures, and Satan has used these failures as a means of hindering many Christians from entering into the possession and enjoyment of those blessings which God has provided for them in Christ. There is, therefore, cause for deepest gratitude that He has been raising up gifted teachers in recent years in various ecclesiastical positions, to expound the Scriptures with special reference to the subject of holiness, and to impress upon the minds and hearts of Christians that it is not enough simply to believe the truth which makes them free, but that there must also be a surrender of the whole being to God in full consecration, and a filling by the Holy Spirit, in order to have the experience of a holy life, and of spiritual power in the Lord's work. Much blessing has attended the Keswick meetings in Great Britain and many similar gatherings in America, at which there has been a simple presentation of the truth of Scripture in the power of the Holy Spirit, without extravagant testimonies, or human efforts to create excitement. Many Christians in these meetings have yielded themselves up to God in full consecration,

and received the filling of the Spirit ; and they have shown by their altered lives, and power in witnessing for Christ afterwards, that something very real and definite had taken place in them. One effect of these meetings has been to promote brotherly love amongst leading teachers and preachers of different denominations, who, after entering into the same experience of blessing, do not allow their little differences about church government and organization to stand in the way of their working heartily together on the same platform, to be channels of blessing to others. At the same time, other developments have been going on in the Church of God, which prove conclusively that the most effectual way in which the unity of the body of Christ can be manifested is, not by mere outward conformity, nor by separation from other Christians, but by "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" with all who are really children of God.

God appears to have set the stamp of His own approval on interdenominational work in connection with foreign missions. Dr. J. Hudson Taylor, the founder and General Director of the China Inland Mission, was originally sent to China by a society, but was afterwards led to give up the support thus received, and to trust in the living God alone for the supply of all his temporal wants, and for the needed wisdom and strength for the work in which he was engaged. The spiritual destitution of China made a deep impression upon his heart, and, after labouring there for a number of years, he returned to the British Isles and made stirring appeals for consecrated workers, irrespective of their ecclesiastical connections. From time to time these appeals have been repeated, and on each occasion many additional labourers have gone forth to this vast and needy field. until now there are over 650 missionaries, male and female, engaged in the work of the China Inland Mission, besides over 460 native helpers ; and up to the present time, throughout a period of over 30 years, no one has been asked to contribute anything to the support of the work, thousands of the heathen have been converted to God, and are now in Church fellowship. And it may be observed that in connection with this evan-

gical and unsectarian work, the various missionaries are able to labour in perfect harmony with each other, and at the same time to hold and follow their own conscientious convictions as to their modes of Church organization. Mr. Taylor tells of an experience which he had, long after conversion and entire consecration to the work of foreign missions, which was doubtless a filling of the Holy Spirit, and enduement with power for service, and which he speaks of as a very real and definite transaction with God. Whilst his presentation of doctrinal truths is very clear and Scriptural, it is evident that he does not attach much importance to the conflicting views of various parties, regarding Church position. The one thing needful for all Christians engaged in the work of the China Inland Mission is that they shall be fully consecrated and filled with the Holy Spirit. From the beginning of his great life work Mr. Taylor has had the hearty sympathy of intelligent and godly Brethren, who have co-operated with him and other Christians (labouring in the same way), according to their means and abilities; but these labourers themselves look to God only, without appealing to men, for means to send out missionaries and to sustain those already in the field. The China Inland Mission never goes into debt.

Somewhat similar to the work of the China Inland Mission is that of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, which commenced about eight years ago, and now has about 300 missionaries in various parts of the foreign field, including China, India, Africa, Japan, Palestine, the West Indies and South America. It also is interdenominational in its principles, and was founded by Rev. A. B. Simpson, a man of naturally weak physical constitution, but of great intellectual power, who in any department of literature would have been likely to take high rank. Educated for the ministry in Knox College, Toronto, Ont., he was noted as one of its brightest students. His first pastorate was at Hamilton, Ont. Afterwards he went to Louisville, Ky., and from there removed to New York, where, in charge of a large Presbyterian congregation, his health, as in former years, frequently broke down, so as to unfit him for the work in which he was engaged.

In this condition, his attention was directed to the truth of Scripture regarding Divine Healing for the body as one of the provisions which God has made in His grace, to be received by faith, just as really as any other blessing promised to His children. At length there came a time in his experience when, in full consecration, he yielded himself up, to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to receive the healing of his body, which he dedicated thenceforth to the service of God. As in the case of J. Hudson Taylor, so in his case, there was the assurance on that occasion of a very definite transaction between himself and God, which did not need to be repeated. He was marvellously healed of his bodily ailments, and has ever since discarded all remedies, and trusted God for all the strength needed for his work, which soon became immensely increased. He saw it to be his privilege to follow the Lord in baptism, and resigned his pastorate of the Presbyterian Church. Commencing an independent evangelistic work in New York, he boldly declared what the Lord had done for him physically, as well as spiritually, and by voice and pen proclaimed the truth of Divine Healing, as he found it in the Word of God. This attracted to his work much attention, and no small amount of ridicule, but the work went on. Sinners were saved, and many sick Christians were marvellously healed of various diseases. An independent congregation was organized, modelled somewhat after the Presbyterian form. A home was established for those waiting on God for healing, where they might receive instruction in the truth of Scripture on this subject. A school was established for the training of home and foreign missionaries. Then came the organization of the Christian Alliance and of the Missionary Alliance, which are now united under the name of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and apparently destined to take a leading part in the world's evangelization within the next few years. The largest voluntary contributions ever made for foreign missions at any meetings have been those made within the past six months at two conventions of this organization ; the first at Old Orchard being \$105,000 ; the second at New York, \$122,000. The experi-

ence and writings of Mr. Simpson have been chiefly instrumental in bringing the subject of Divine Healing very prominently before Christians, especially in America, and many thousands have reason to praise God for having been thus led to look into His own Word and find therein the grounds upon which they have been enabled to claim and receive by faith, deliverance from bodily sickness and infirmities. In all former ages of the Church there have been witnesses to the power of God to heal the body, simply in answer to the prayer of faith ; and in the latter part of this century the same truth has been made known by the experience and writings of Dorothea Trudel, of Switzerland ; Dr. Boardman, of London ; Dr. Chas. Cullis and Dr. A. J. Gordon, of Boston ; Carrie Judd, of Buffalo, and many others ; but the subject has never before been so fully brought before the minds of Christians as in the writings and addresses of Mr. Simpson. It is only right to add, that whilst he holds this truth to be a part of the Gospel, he declares that it is only a subordinate part, and cautions Christians against fanaticism on the subject. Raised in a different school from J. Hudson Taylor, he seems to have arrived at pretty nearly the same conclusions as to the needs of the mission field at the present day ; and the main qualifications insisted on for all missionaries sent out by the Christian and Missionary Alliance are, full consecration, and a distinct experience of the filling of the Holy Spirit, and enduement of power for service. In his teaching on the subject of Divine Healing he shows that this work is accomplished by the indwelling Holy Spirit, who quickens, even now, our mortal bodies, and the recognition of whose presence and power always brings both spiritual and physical blessing.

Another interdenominational work is the South African Mission, of which Rev. Andrew Murray is president. God has wonderfully blessed this mission. Many of the natives have been soundly converted, and Mr. Murray has established a College for the training of native evangelists, where many young men are being trained in their own land to preach the Gospel to their countrymen. These also are

works of faith, both the Mission and the College being supported by the voluntary contributions of Christians. The main qualification required of all engaged in the South African Mission is that they shall be fully consecrated and endued by the Holy Spirit with power.

But the name of Andrew Murray is chiefly endeared to the hearts of Christians everywhere by the devotional books which he has published, and which have been the means of blessing to tens of thousands who had been longing for deeper and sweeter fellowship with God than they had previously enjoyed. Many of these, at first attracted to meetings of the "Holiness People," and afterwards repelled by the absurd statements and extravagant testimonies of their teachers, have found in the writings of Andrew Murray that Scriptural teaching which they needed regarding the person and work of the Holy Spirit, and that holiness of life which God requires from all His children. The deep, spiritual teaching of these publications, their freedom from all extravagances, and their literal adherence to the Word of God, make them, next to the Bible itself, some of the most valuable books that can be placed in the hands of young Christians, and of older ones desirous of living in communion with God. Instead of attacking error, he presents truth in such a convincing manner that criticism is disarmed, and the reader is forced to acknowledge that the writer has been taught by the Holy Spirit. In the strongest possible light he presents the truth ; that the Word of God and the Spirit of God are both needful ; that the Word without the Spirit is only a dead letter ; and that it is through the Word that the will of God is revealed by the Spirit. The absolute necessity for the filling of the Holy Spirit, not only for service, but also for the daily life and walk of the Christian, is so forcibly presented that very few who have read his works can rest satisfied without the actual experience of what they see to be so needful for God's glory and their own happiness. His books are absolutely free from all sarcastic or unkind remarks about others who may not see with him, and he never allows his imagination to lead him away from the plain,

simple teaching of Scripture on those subjects that are of most vital importance to the Church of God at the present time.

One thing that is worthy of notice in connection with all the interdenominational missions, to which reference has been made, is the great number of women engaged in them. Surely this is a fulfillment, in some measure, of the prediction in Joel, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, and on my servants, and on my handmaidens will I pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy, and I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood and fire and vapour of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come," etc. (Acts ii. 17-20). Only a partial fulfillment of this prediction took place at Pentecost, and we are warranted in looking for much greater exhibitions of the Spirit's power, in these last days, than the world has ever witnessed since His first descent at Pentecost.

Another remarkable thing in connection with all these interdenominational missions is that they look to God alone for the means to carry on their work, besides requiring of all their workers entire consecration, and the enduement of power for service, by the filling of the Holy Spirit. And still further, they are all agreed in not requiring adhesion to any particular forms of Church worship and organization.

What is the chief lesson that we should learn from these examples? Is it not this: That when the Holy Spirit, in all His fullness, really takes possession of a Christian's heart, sectarian barriers and prejudices are broken down. The one Spirit, working alike in the members of the "One Body," compels them to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"; forbearance is exercised where judgments differ; and there is a manifestation to the world of that unity for which the Lord Jesus Christ prayed, in John xvii. 21, in such a manner that the world will be forced to believe that the

Father sent Him. This is the most potent argument with which to meet the increasing infidelity of these last days, when the chairs of our theological colleges are being filled by unconverted professors, styled "higher critics," who, in milder form, are teaching to future clergymen the stale blasphemies of Voltaire and Tom Paine. This is the way, for which the Lord Jesus Christ prayed, to meet the attacks of Satan upon the divine authority of the Word of God. Let "Brethren" cease their bickerings with one another, and break down the party walls of separation between the many sects amongst themselves. Let them break down, also, the wall of separation, which God never told them to build, between themselves and the Christians in the denominations; and henceforth let them endeavour to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," with all the members of the "One Body"; whilst still holding fast to every truth that God has clearly revealed to them by the Spirit through the Word. Let them understand this, that clerisy is not confined to the Church of Rome and the denominations, or the so-called clergy, and whilst they are denouncing others for Nicolaitanism, they may be practically condoning the same heinous sin, by allowing themselves to be brought into bondage by some of their own teachers. There has been too much of taking for granted that whatever leading teachers say must be right. It is in this way that all the divisions, and the sectarian spirit, have come in and spoiled a testimony, which might otherwise have yielded more abundant fruit to the glory of God, than has ever yet been experienced through the instrumentality of "Brethren."

CHAPTER X.

Addresses to the Churches at Philadelphia and Laodicea.

IF the movement of "Brethren," with its stimulus to Bible study, and its gathering simply in the Name of Jesus, was a partial fulfillment of the prophetic forecast given in Rev. iii. of the Church at Philadelphia, the "Holiness Movement" may well be regarded as the response given by individual Christians to the Lord's own appeal to the Laodicean Church in the last days, immediately before the close of this dispensation: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."

Both these movements have been of God, and both have been strongly marked, and greatly hindered by human failure.

In the Philadelphia stage of the Church's history the Word of God, which had been so long a sealed book to Popish Christendom, and only partially understood, with the help of commentaries, to the great majority of Protestants, began to be studied as never before during the Christian era, under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit. Dispensational truth, without which there cannot be a right understanding of the Scriptures, became known, not only amongst "Brethren," but also to many in the various denominations. With the knowledge of this truth came the proclamation of the Lord's Second Coming as the great hope of the Church. Those who really believed in His speedy coming hastened to find open doors for the Gospel, at home and abroad, where they might profitably use the talents entrusted to them, and thus occupy till He should come. The word of His patience was kept, His name exalted, the Scriptures searched, and the Gospel of the grace of God preached in its simplicity; and the results

were very blessed. Great progress was made within a few years in learning and publishing clear Scriptural doctrines ; but along with this came the acquisition of knowledge that only puffed up ; truth learned clearly enough by the intellect, but without the unction and power of the Holy Spirit. Then came lukewarmness in life and testimony ; boasting of spiritual riches ; feeling the need of nothing, and unconsciousness of the extent to which communion with God had been lost. The testimony of " Brethren " as a whole has been spoiled by the pride of many in their own spiritual gifts and acquirements, boasting of their knowledge of the Word, and attempting to go beyond what the Word commands, by building walls of separation between themselves and the Christians in the denominations ; they have failed to manifest the unity of the Spirit in the many sects into which they are divided, or towards other Christians who have not been led into a similar position.

It is in the midst of such real spiritual destitution that the Lord's voice is heard saying to the Laodicean Church . " I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see." And He adds: " As many as I love I rebuke and chasten ; be zealous, therefore, and repent." What is the gold here referred to but the divine nature itself ; or the white raiment but the divine righteousness ; and what does the buying from God mean but receiving, without money and without price, that which, in His infinite grace, He offers as a free gift (Isaiah lv. : 1). A clear knowledge of the letter of the Word is good, and a consistent, moral life, with zeal in service, is commendable. But there are such things as holding the truth in unrighteousness and cultivating a correct outward deportment, without experiencing much of the constraining love of Christ in the heart. It is to those who are in this condition that the Lord's rebuke is addressed, and His chastisements administered, in order that they may be awakened to a sense of deeper need than can be satisfied with reading the

Word, with service, or with outward observances of any kind. He counsels them to buy of Him, or, in other words, to receive as a free gift His own divine life, in all its fullness, so that He may henceforth live and reign within them ; and to receive His own divine righteousness, both imputed and imparted, so that they may shine with a glory that is not their own; and which leaves no room for boasting on their part, because they, as subjects of His grace, are the very persons who required His rebukes and chastisements.

In order that there may be no mistake about the means by which alone there can be the experience of true holiness, and, therefore, of real communion with God, He adds : " Behold I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." It is only the presence of God that makes holy. He dwelt in the tabernacle and in the temple after they were prepared and set apart for His use. He tells Christians that their bodies are His temples, but how few of these temples have yet been set apart, in full consecration, as His dwelling place ! In John xiv. : 23 the Lord had said to His disciples : " If a man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him ; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." But now, at the close of this day of grace, He says to those who have failed, notwithstanding the clearest light, to those whom He has had to rebuke and chasten, " Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."

Amongst the " Brethren," and throughout all evangelical denominations, there have been many Christians who, after conversion, have yielded themselves up to God in full consecration, to be filled with the Holy Spirit and endued with power for service ; and their holy and devoted after-lives have borne witness to the reality of the change which thus took place, and through which God has been glorified in them. It matters not by what name this new experience has been called—a " second blessing," or " the higher life," or a " deeper experience," or " unbroken communion," or " en-

tire sanctification," or a "clean heart," etc., the result is the same. No new discovery has been made. But in each case there has been a deeper consciousness of need, an entire surrender of the will, and the door of the heart has been opened for the Lord Jesus Christ to come in by His Spirit, and take full possession, to rule and reign supremely, and to make holy by His own abiding presence.

What is referred to, therefore, as the "Holiness Movement" is nothing new in the Church of God, but only a more general awakening, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to a deep sense of the present need of something more than sound doctrine, and correct Church position, and outwardly religious and respectable, moral lives. Even as God was manifest in the flesh in the person of His own spotless Son, so He desires in these last days to come into the hearts of fallen men and women, if they will but open the doors to Him, that He may live in them, and walk in them, and manifest His glory through them in this world. Only thus can His children be fitted for the fulfillment of His Word in them, and through them, as the Coming of the Lord for His Church draws nigh.

Compared with the accomplishment of this great purpose, all the differences of opinion between Christians about Church position, and organization, and the place and form of worship, sink into insignificance; and as the saints of God enter into this experience of the Holy Spirit's indwelling in all His fullness, their hearts are drawn together by an irresistible bond of sympathy and love, so that there is a manifestation to the world of their unity in Christ, which is a real answer to His prayer to the Father in John xvii. : 21.

CHAPTER XI.

Mystery, Babylon the Great.

WHAT is Babylon? The meaning of the word is "confusion." The city of that name was in the plain of Shinar, in Chaldea, on the banks of the River Euphrates, where the Tower of Babel had been built about 2230 B.C., when men all spoke one language, in order to escape the judgment of God in the event of another flood coming upon the earth. For this God confounded their language, so that they could not understand each other, and the builders were scattered over the earth. It was there that Nimrod, the mighty hunter, built the City of Babil, which is the Hebrew word for "gate of God," afterwards better known by its Greek name of Babylon (meaning "confusion"), which became the renowned capital of the Babylonian Empire, and attained its highest splendour under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. It was there that Daniel and other Hebrews were held in captivity, and bore faithful testimony for the true God in the midst of idolatrous surroundings, and of the wealth and luxury and licentiousness of its people. At that time it seemed to be the centre of all earthly glory and power.

As Egypt, the scene of Israel's first captivity, is to the Church the type of the world from which she has come out, so it would seem that Babylon is typical to her of Christendom, the place of her earthly sojourn, with its 150 sects and their confusion of tongues. As the judgments predicted against that city have been literally fulfilled, so also will those against Christendom, the mystic Babylon, be literally executed after the Church has been taken away, and at the end of the great tribulation. We have seen before how, in Rev. ii. and iii., the Lord addresses Christendom as His Church throughout the whole of this dispensation; but it is only to the "overcomers" that rewards are promised, and they are

left in Christendom until He comes and takes His Church to be with Himself, as His bride, to share His glory, and rejoice forever in His presence. After the Church is taken away, the religious machinery will still go on, with its unconverted ministers and members. The "higher critics" will then have everything their own way, and they will doubtless give most learned and rational explanations to account for the sudden disappearance of all those "peculiar people" who claimed to have been "born again" and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Soon afterwards all semblance of spirituality will be lost, and all regard for decency set aside; and what was formerly looked upon as Christendom will, after the Church has been taken from it, be revealed as "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (Rev. 17 : 5). And as she ripens for judgment under the seventh vial, a voice from heaven is heard saying for the first time, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18 : 4). Who the people thus addressed are is not stated, but it must be borne in mind that the Church had been taken up before the time of tribulation commenced. Enough has been said to show that Christendom, as it is now, with its 150 sects, and its confusion of tongues, but without the Church, and, therefore, without the Holy Spirit, is identical with the mystic Babylon yet to be revealed, and described in Rev. 17 and 18. The mystery of iniquity is still working, and Christendom is fast hastening to its doom. The rapid spread of infidelity amongst theological professors and university graduates, the ease with which unconverted men and women are admitted as Church members, and thus encouraged to make a false profession, and the unblushing effrontery with which ungodly Church entertainments for raising money are advertised, all point to the speedy development of the mystic Babylon, from which all the people of God will be commanded to "come out," after the Church has been taken away (Rev. 18 : 4).

As an instance of the way in which many so-called Churches are rushing on in the down grade to apostasy, read

the following extracts. The first is from a recent issue (Dec. 19, 1896) of the Toronto "Telegram," which says :—

SKIRT DANCE AT CHURCH.

The Christian World of December 3rd, as an illustration showing the lengths to which the modern Church will sometimes go in "raising the wind," tells its readers of "a flaming poster, which is now adorning the walls of Gateshead, announcing a 'Grand Fancy Market and Carnival,' in connection with Holy Trinity Church. The entertainments are to include 'skirt dancing,' 'side-splitting competitions for ladies and gentlemen,' and a 'Grand Comic Operetta.' One wonders," says the World, "what the opening ceremony, to be conducted by a reverend vicar, will be like. The suggested combination of music hall and prayer book will surely be the funniest part of this very funny experiment."

On the same day that the above paragraph appeared, the Toronto "Globe" published a leading article, from which the following extracts are taken:—

CHURCH AMUSEMENTS.

The place of cold ham in the Christian system seems to have been completely and unfortunately overlooked by New Testament writers. The omission, however, is being remedied by the modern Church in a thorough and practical manner. We venture this assertion upon the authority of Dr. W. B. Hale, who has for some years made a study of the subject, and from time to time given his results to the world through the medium of "The Forum." The current issue of that magazine contains his latest contribution, entitled "Another Year of Church Entertainments." He gives selections from a year's record of more than 500 of these occasions. All denominations, Protestant and Catholic, are included, and the facts are presented without the slightest reserve. It appears that some of the Christian Churches of the United States, in their efforts to advance the cause of pure and undefiled religion, have made use of the following blessed and apostolic agencies. Among comedies: Aunt Jemima's

Album, The Mystic Midgets, Mrs. Jarley's Waxworks, rejuvenescent with Trilby characters, The Man Who Tickled His Wives to Death, The Mosque of Culture, Woodcock's Little Game, Poor Pillicaddy, A Shakespearian carnival, in which the reverend priest appeared as Hamlet, and Julius Caesar led the march in the closing dance ; Down by the Sea, a baby rattle and spoon drill ; Just Us Girls ; the Peak sisters, who sang " Do You Know the Mouth of Man ? " in which the gentle art of kissing is referred to ninety times. For general entertainments we select: A wish-bone party, new woman's social, progressive whist party, grand barbecue, New Year's dance, birthday parties, Yule-tide market, weigh social, mock trials, poker parties, fancy dress drills, tambourine drill, dude drill, moral dime show, spider web party, Mother Goose market, husking bee ; athletic exhibitions, with a real prize-fighter fresh from court, for brutal assault, as chief drawing card ; dance of Arab maidens, blackbird ballet, Chew Glue sisters in song and dance specialties, Sunday evening magic lanterns, eight silver dollars offered of an evening to the discerning mind able to unravel the pastor's text, printed in choicest " pi " ; and last, but not least, an historic Trilby party, in which young ladies, displayed from behind a curtain, raised to a sufficient height, their bare feet, and men in front bid for the privilege of taking the ankles that particularly struck their fancy out to supper.

By simply cataloguing this puerile and disgusting list for the calm contemplation of the public, Dr. Hale has rendered a great service to the Church. No man of the slightest moral earnestness or regard for the decencies of life can read this recital with other than feelings of deepest shame and sorrow. When we remember the part played by the Christian Church in history—her martyrdoms, her learning, her leadership, her uplifting and divine influence upon all society ; when we think of the solemn and dread tragedy that is unfolding in the civilized world to-day ; when we call to mind the fact that in the principles and forces and life that have made the Church, and given her a meaning and message, is revealed the secret of all human progress, and then put over against all this the

inaneities and imbecilities revealed in Dr. Hale's record, it is almost enough to turn men into pessimists or atheists.

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It is necessary to remember that this record is in a measure one-sided. While it represents nearly all denominations, its material is mainly derived from those who lay emphasis upon form rather than life, or who stand for so-called liberalism and negation. For every one of these churches there are hundreds—certainly scores—that would shrink from such frivolities with disgust. Dr. Hale, therefore, owes it to the cause of religion to give us an account of Churches which do not indulge in these things, but which are centres of light, and great, positive, moral and spiritual forces in the land. * *

* * * It is a truism to say that the age is amazingly materialistic. But this same truism seems to account for the decay of those delicate spiritual virtues which exalt a nation. The ancient idea was that Christians are a "peculiar people"—in the world but not of the world—peculiar by reason of their greater unselfishness, frugality, peacefulness, joy. The modern Christian of the "Chew Glue" type has outgrown this ancient superstition. To him it is uncharitable to differ from the world. He is in the world, and delights to show that the world is still in him. He believes in the "brotherhood of man," and asserts that what is good enough for men outside the Church is good enough for him. He is in business, and the stress of struggle is so intense that he is unfitted for any religious or mental exercise other than the most superficial. The result of all this is the presence in the churches of a class of members marked by shallowness of religious experience and frivolity of life and ideal. A large infusion of the Christianity of Christ would speedily render Dr. Hale's work unnecessary—a consummation which he and every sane man must devoutly long for.

It is not at all likely that any one who is really a Christian would remain long connected with any body of people, calling themselves a Church, who could give such disgusting exhibitions and entertainments as those referred to in the above extracts. And it is hard to account for the indulgence in such

things, in any other way than by the utter lack of all spiritual life, and even disregard for common decency. There can be no doubt about the propriety of urging any Christian to "come out" immediately from all appearance of fellowship with things so dishonouring to God, and so contrary to all sense of propriety. But it is quite another thing to urge him to come out of such an association for the purpose of "joining us" as a different organization in Christendom. The man who is really born of God is "joined to the Lord," and was a member of His Church the moment he became a child of God. The Scriptures do not require him to "join" anything. But he is commanded not to forsake the assembling with other children of God; and he will heed the Father's word, and take his place at his Father's table. If he is unequally yoked with unbelievers, or finds himself otherwise associated with a manifestation of the mystic Babylon, a little before the time when all Christendom, in its universal apostasy, will thus be manifested, let him search the Word under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and get the mind of God as to whether he should remain where he is and testify against the evils by which he is surrounded, or "come out" from them, and seek more congenial fellowship with Christians who are worshipping God in spirit and in truth, and endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace with all other members of the "One Body." In either case let him simply obey God, and leave all the consequences with Him.

It is evident from the teaching of the Word and the signs of the times that we are in "the last days," when the final doom of apostate Christendom is about to be fixed very shortly by the taking up of the Church, after which God's terrible judgments will be executed upon the mystic Babylon, composed of those who have been only nominal professors of Christianity; at the "Gate of God" without entering into His kingdom, and dwelling in the midst of "confusion" until the door is forever shut, and nothing but judgment awaits them.

Surely at such a time as this it behooves all true Christians to rise to a right understanding of their responsibility as mem-

bers of the body of Christ, with whom they will soon appear in manifested glory. He has sent the Comforter to select His bride, and prepare her for the nuptial feast ; but how few have "oil in their vessels" with their lamps of profession, how many deceived souls are vainly thinking it will be all right with them ; but they have never received the Holy Spirit, and if He came now they must be forever shut out with those awful words from His own lips, "I know you not." Meanwhile, those who are ready and waiting for His coming are scattered and divided from each other in the Babylonish "confusion" of Christendom, so that it is hard to distinguish the genuine Christian from the false professor, and their efforts to serve God are effectually crippled by the leaven of wickedness that is working around them on every side. God's remedy for man's impotence is the power of the Holy Spirit. "Be filled with the Spirit" is the command that is given to every child of God. And this command is just as binding as "Thou shalt not steal." This is not merely a privilege, that we may or may not avail ourselves of, as we see fit. It is a positive command, the neglect of which means disobedience to God, lack of power in His service, and want of real communion with Christ and all who are members of His body. Let each member of the "One Body" be filled with the Spirit, and "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," and there will then be such a manifestation of unity as will satisfy His heart, and such power with their testimony as will enable them successfully to combat with the forces of evil that on every hand are seeking to undermine the truth, and hinder blessing to the souls of men.

The Lord Himself says to every Christian at this time, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me." If this appeal is heard and obeyed by all true Christians, there will be a manifested spiritual unity which will break down sectarian bigotry and prejudice, and make a real separation between the Church and the world, and deliver from the bondage of Babylonish captivity.

CHAPTER XII.

Necessity of Mutual Forbearance as to Church Position, etc.

IN Romans xiv. there is a line of teaching that should set at rest, between Brethren and the various denominations, all contention as to Church position, form and place of worship, and other matters, concerning which the Word of God has not given explicit directions. In this chapter the right of each Christian to differ in judgment from others upon such subjects is clearly laid down ; and the tendency to find fault with those who do not see with us, or submit to our dictation, is severely rebuked. If, as Dr. Young says in his concordance, the correct meaning of the word "heretic" is "an opinionative person," there are many heretics in the Church to-day who not only stick to their own opinions, but seem determined to make others submit to them also. And this is doubtless the cause of most of the ill-feeling so often displayed between various denominations and the different sects into which Brethren are divided.

But, it may be asked, are not Christians commanded to "be of one mind," to "all speak the same thing," and to "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" ? (2 Cor. xiii. 11 ; 1 Peter iii. 8, and 1 Cor. i. 10). Quite true, but these injunctions must be read in connection with Romans xiv., which clearly shows that there may be many things, regarding which specific directions are not given, in the Word of God about which they may conscientiously differ in opinion, and concerning which they are commanded to exercise mutual forbearance with one another. The only way in which this can be done is by obedience to the injunction to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all

lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love ; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace " (Eph. iv. 1-3). Certainly not by censorious speaking, or harsh criticism, or sarcastic references to the persons, positions, or attainments of others.

In the preceding pages it has been found necessary to speak in very plain terms in reference to failures amongst " Brethren " and " Holiness People," some of whom seem to claim possession of a more exalted place of blessing and privilege than most other Christians, but from entirely different standpoints. The object in pointing to these failures has been, not to wound individuals who have erred, but to show the need there is for the exercise of mutual forbearance on the part of the most enlightened Christians. It is quite possible for them to get such a knowledge of the Word as to seem like walking concordances, and yet to have little or no spiritual discernment of the truths which it contains. It is possible to have, through a sound religious training, such a correct knowledge of orthodox doctrines as to be fitted for a professor's chair in a theological college, and yet to have but little practical acquaintance with the most elementary principles of the Christian life. And it is just as possible for a man to pose as a teacher of holiness, and talk about the " death of self," when he is full of self-conceit and self-glorification, and when others know that he is sinning grievously when boasting of his own sinlessness.

These failures on the part of some " Brethren " and some " Holiness People," with their one-sided presentation of certain important truths, have been great hindrances in the way of other Christians learning the truth of the Word, and seeking, in full consecration, the filling of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God, without the personal teaching of its Divine Author, is not sufficient; and the professed reliance upon the Holy Spirit alone, without reference to the Word which He has inspired, is sure to lead into the grossest errors.

Whilst Brethren have been quarrelling amongst themselves and denouncing " the sects," and Holiness People have been rivalling each other in the strength of their testimonies to

their own holiness, it would seem as if God has, in a great measure, been gradually setting aside both these parties as witnesses to the truth of His Word and the power of His Spirit. Other instruments are now being used who are not confined to party lines or animated by a sectarian spirit ; but are enabled to look on the whole Church on earth as God sees it, and seek to minister to the whole body of Christ, without regard to the ecclesiastical positions in which its members may be. There is abundant reason for thankfulness that through the Keswick meetings and the teaching of such men as Andrew Murray, F. B. Meyer, J. Hudson Taylor, D. L. Moody, A. B. Simpson, A. T. Pierson, and many others, sound scriptural teaching is now being presented on the subject of Holiness in connection with the person and work of the Holy Spirit. By these means many Christians have been led to hear the call of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to open the doors of their hearts in full consecration to Him whose presence alone can make them holy.

Through the Mildmay Conferences, the Dublin meetings, and other similar undenominational gatherings in Great Britain and Ireland, Christians there have in the past been greatly helped in the study of the Word. And through the Niagara Conferences in America, which are interdenominational meetings, sound Scripture teaching has been given for many years through the ministry of Dr. Brooks, of St. Louis ; Dr. A. T. Pierson, of Philadelphia ; Dr. H. M. Parsons, of Toronto ; Dr. W. J. Erdman, Dr. Alfred Erdman, Dr. West, Professor Moorhouse, George C. Needham and others, who have given clear expositions of truth regarding the Lord's Second Coming, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, and other most important subjects ; and at the same time have faithfully warned Christians against the infidelity now permeating the various ecclesiastical systems in the form of so-called "higher criticism."

Some Brethren would probably say to such ministers of Christ as have been named above, "Come out of these systems." But if they were to come out, who would sound the

warnings against the errors they are opposing? And who would minister to the Christians whom they might thus forsake and leave as a prey to the "grievous wolves" who might come after them? It is an easy thing to cry, "Come out of Babylon" before God has commanded us to do so; but a solemn responsibility rests upon any true minister of Christ who is in a position where he is being used of God in the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints, if he leaves that position without the clear warrant of the Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Many such will doubtless be classed amongst the "overcomers," who, in this time of "confusion" in modern Christendom, are contending earnestly for the truth, and will be rewarded for faithful service.

If, on the other hand, any Christians are convinced by the teaching of the Word, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that they are in a false position, either through being unequally yoked with unbelievers, or for any other reason, let them obey God at whatever cost, and take such a stand with reference to their fellow-believers as they see to be most pleasing to Him. But let them beware at the same time lest they may have been only led to change their positions by the arguments, or at the dictation of others, who may be actuated by a proselytizing spirit, whilst professing to have only the glory of God in view. Many have thus been led to leave "the sects," only to find themselves in a more sectarian position than before.

The Lord Himself said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte." They were very zealous, as they thought, for the glory of God, but He who is the searcher of all hearts knew them better than they knew themselves, and thus severely rebuked them. The most persistent proselytizers to-day are the petty sects of Christendom that are farthest from the fundamental truth of the Word, and engaged in propagating the most dangerous errors, including Mormons, Christadelphians, Spiritualists, Christian Scientists, and a host of others. Surely no true Christian ought to follow their example in this respect. For those who really wish to be pro-

fitably engaged in the Lord's service the opportunities are ample. Doors are open on every hand. In the highways and hedges, once occupied chiefly by preachers amongst Brethren, but now mainly by the Salvation Army, there are still many openings for preaching the Gospel. If souls are saved in this work, it is only right their spiritual fathers should have the privilege of instructing them respecting their relationship to God as worshippers and to other Christians as members of the body of Christ. And if the field at home is so crowded with labourers that there is no room for such service, let them go to heathen lands, where millions are dying yearly without ever hearing the sound of the Gospel. Why should those who are really Christians, desirous of being used for the glory of God, waste their time and talents in efforts to unsettle the minds of other Christians as to their Church position, who may be under the ministry of an enlightened and godly pastor, when there are so many fields for much nobler service ?

There are doubtless many godly Brethren, labouring as teachers and evangelists, who deplore the proselytizing and sectarian spirit that prevails so widely, and see no remedy for the existing confusion but the coming of the Lord Himself. But there is a present call for the manifestation of real unity in all the members of the body of Christ, which all are responsible to hear and obey. It is a call to each individual, which, if obeyed, should produce most blessed results in outward manifestation. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with Me." Many Brethren in the past have responded to this call without extending the hand of fellowship to those in the denominations who have also responded, and the wall of separation is still kept up which should never have been built ; and the singular fact is obvious to all, that Christ is having blessed fellowship with some Christians with whom certain godly Brethren will have no fellowship whatever. Surely there is something sadly wrong about such a state of things as this, when differences of opinion about Church position separate those whom God

has so closely united as members of the "One Body," and desires to see manifesting their unity with one another.

The most distinguished preachers and teachers have tried in vain to stem the tide of infidelity in the form of so-called "higher criticism," which has been sweeping through the various denominations, threatening to thrust out all faithful witnesses for the truth, and fill their pulpits with conceited graduates from theological seminaries, where they have been taught not to believe anything which they cannot understand, at least in so far as the Word of God is concerned. There is but one really effective argument with which to meet the prevailing and increasing skepticism of the present time, and that is the manifestation of unity by all true Christians, one toward another, coupled at the same time with the exercise of that mutual forbearance enjoined in the fourteenth chapter of Romans. Thank God for the evidences accumulating every day of a tendency on the part of all truly consecrated Christians to break down the barriers that have long separated them from each other on account of petty differences of opinion on minor questions. The very citadels of truth are being attacked on every side by unscrupulous foes under the leadership of the arch enemy of souls. It is time for Christians to awake to the consciousness of present need. So long as they are divided, and each contending for his own little sect or party instead of being united to meet the common enemy, infidelity will continue to increase. God's remedy for the world's infidelity is contained in the Lord's Prayer—"that they all may be one * * * that the world may believe" (John xvii. 21). But how is this to be brought about? The Brethren's cry to "come out of Babylon" was premature, as God has not authorized that call to be made until the close of the great tribulation (Rev. xviii. 4); and the many sects amongst themselves show that there is a sense in which they are still in Babylon, which, as we have seen, means "confusion." The walls of separation subsisting between Christians in the various denominations, and Christians amongst Brethren, are positive hindrances to any manifestation of unity of which the world can take notice. The special charac-

teristic of the Church at the present day is its lukewarmness ; and it is to this lukewarm Laodicean Church that the Lord says, " Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me." God sees in His Church, as it now stands, universal failure ; and, as a whole, He spues it out of His mouth, and addresses each Christian individually, no matter what his ecclesiastical position may be, " if any man hear My voice." Whoever hears His voice and opens the door of his heart to Him will have blessed and happy communion and the abiding presence of the Lord Jesus Christ by His Spirit will create a bond of union with all others who have also heard His voice, and opened the doors of their hearts to Him, which will be stronger than any outward ties that could be formed. The one Spirit filling all the members of the " One Body " produced at Pentecost such a manifestation of unity as compelled the world to believe their testimony that God the Father had sent His Son. In Acts ii. 46, 47 we read that the disciples, " continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home (R.V.), did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart praising God, and having favour with all the people." The same results can only be accomplished again by the same means. Whilst Christians have been trying to produce outward uniformity in their religious forms and observances by rules and regulations of their own creation, God has been asking each one the same question put by Paul to the twelve disciples at Ephesus, " Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed ? " (Acts xix. 2), or " Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed ? " (R.V.), and commanding them to be " filled with the Spirit " (Eph. v. 18), and to endeavour " to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace " ; and the Lord Himself is now saying to each one at the end of this dispensation, " Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me " (Rev. iii. 20). After His resurrection, and immediately before His ascension to heaven, He had said to His disciples,

"Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you ; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8). Witness bearing to Him was the result of their being filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and this led to a manifestation of unity, which the world could neither gainsay nor resist.

In these "last days" scoffers are saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Peter iii. 4); and God is awakening professing Christians to see that the end of this dispensation is very near, that the Lord Himself is at hand, and that, if they would be ready for His coming, they must, like the wise virgins, have oil in their vessels with their lamps ; or, in other words, they need to receive the Holy Spirit in all His fullness. Of the many proofs given in Scripture that we are now in the "last days," none are more applicable to the present time than the following : "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof : from such turn away" (2 Tim. iii. 1-5). For the sake of those who may be deceiving themselves with a false profession, it is well that such plain marks are given in these verses to distinguish those not prepared for the Lord's coming.

The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost to the praying and waiting disciples in fulfillment of the promises which the Lord had given to them. A mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit in these "last days" is also promised, and there are many indications of a partial fulfillment of these predictions, some of which have been noticed in the preceding pages. Many Christians, in all kinds of ecclesiastical positions, have been yielding themselves up to God in full consecration, and receiving the filling of the Spirit, and going forth as witnesses for Christ to heathen lands in greater numbers than ever before. Thou-

sands of Christians have been healed in body within the past twenty years in answer to the prayer of faith. And millions of dollars have been received in answer to prayer by the Lord's servants, who looked to Him alone in faith for the means to carry on His own work.

But the great majority of genuine Christians are still in the lukewarm Laodicean condition, and don't know it ; and the unconverted Church members are quite satisfied with their outward profession, and think they have need of nothing. Some are puffed up with their knowledge of the letter of the Word without the Spirit's teaching ; others are boasting of their sinlessness, and others are going on, heedless and careless as to whether heaven or hell is before them.

In the meantime, those who have heard the Lord's voice, and opened the doors of their hearts to Him, are in some measure "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" with one another in spite of all the barriers which sectarian bigotry has sought to raise between them ; and just in proportion as the unity of the Spirit is thus kept, there is the manifestation of the unity of the "One Body," and an answer to the Lord's Prayer "that they all may be one * * * that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

This has been the result in interdenominational missions and conventions ; and if all who are really Christians were fully consecrated and filled with the Holy Spirit, they would all endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the same way ; and there would then be such a manifestation of "oneness" as the Lord Jesus Christ prayed for, and the mouths of blaspheming infidels would be stopped by the most positive evidence that God the Father had sent His Son into the world.

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