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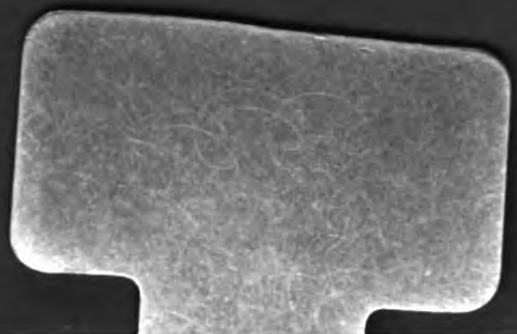
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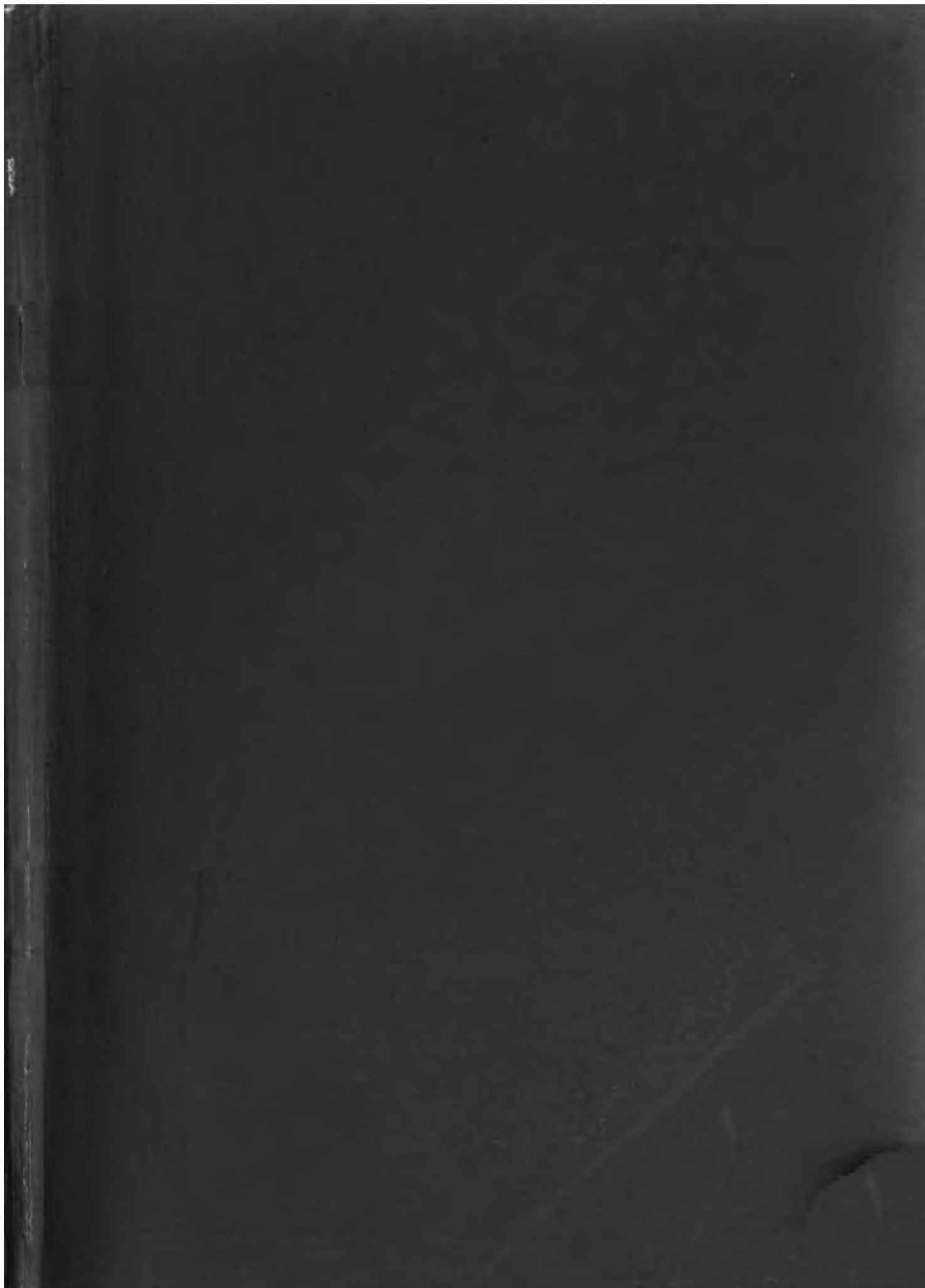
THE
HISTORY AND TEACHING
OF THE
PLYMOUTH BRETHREN.

J. S. TEULON, M.A.



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OF THE
PLYMOUTH BRETHREN.

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PREFACE.

THE writer of this little book contributed an Article on the Plymouth Brethren to the *Church Quarterly Review* of April 1879. He has, however, carefully examined the whole subject again, and recast his treatment of it; while several elements in the teaching of the Brethren, which found no notice in the Article, have been dealt with in the following pages. It has been his endeavour throughout to gain his acquaintance with their system from a careful study of their own recognised writers, and while he has read such treatises of their opponents as have come into his hands, he is not aware that he has accepted a single statement as to their teaching which he has not found to be fully confirmed by themselves.

January 1883.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER II.	
THE HISTORY OF THE PLYMOUTH BRETHREN	8
CHAPTER III.	
THE CHURCH	23
CHAPTER IV.	
THE RESOURCE OF THE FAITHFUL AMID THE RUIN OF THE CHURCH	43
CHAPTER V.	
JUSTIFICATION	62
CHAPTER VI.	
SANCTIFICATION	87
CHAPTER VII.	
THE CHRISTIAN'S RULE OF LIFE	115
CHAPTER VIII.	
THE RELATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN TO THE WORLD	142
CHAPTER IX.	
PROPHECY	171

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE religious movement with which these pages are concerned has arisen during the present century. From very small beginnings it has in the course of fifty years attained a wide-spread influence, and has enlisted under its banner persons of distinguished rank and of the highest intellectual culture. Nor has its work been by any means confined to the country of its birth. It has found a home in many continental States; it is well known in the colonies, and in America; while in most of the larger towns of Great Britain its representatives have their places of assembly. Though it employs evangelistic agencies to make its tenets known, and to gather in its converts, the main instrument of its propagation has been the press rather than the pulpit, and numbers, to whom the society itself is little more than a name, have unconsciously

imbibed its principles from a perusal of its periodicals, its pamphlets, and its leaflets.

It is always instructive, and often most interesting, to trace the rise of an influential school or sect, to note the circumstances which gave it birth, and the different forms which it has assumed in the course of its development. Such movements are not the result of chance; nor do they merely represent the product of individual piety, genius, or self-will. Though in most cases they may be referred to some individual founder, they could never gain wide acceptance unless they were felt in a measure to supply some want of the age; and therefore a careful study of them will often furnish us with a key to the religious history of the day in which they arose. But the interest and instruction are multiplied tenfold when the movement under consideration has arisen in our own age. It then becomes a paramount duty to examine it with care. It throws light upon the period in which we live, and even in its most abnormal developments may remind the Church

of the day of some portion of her inheritance of truth which has been forgotten for a season, but for the revival of which the circumstances of the time are imperatively calling; while on the other hand the special character of any false teaching which may accompany such movements demands the attentive and dispassionate examination of all who desire to see their way through the perplexities of their time, and to secure the religious interests of their country. All these considerations apply in full force to the remarkable movement with which we are now concerned. Its rapid growth, its wide-spread influence, its tenacious hold on those who join it, all go to show that it is felt by many both in this and foreign countries to furnish some kind of supply to the religious necessities of the age. An examination of it then may help us to see what these necessities are, and should lead Churchmen to enquire further whether the Church herself out of the abundant stores committed to her keeping is not fully able to supply them.

CHAPTER II.

THE HISTORY OF THE PLYMOUTH BRETHREN.

ABOUT the year 1828 a small company of devout men, chiefly churchmen, were in the habit of meeting in a house in Dublin for the study of the Scriptures, mutual conference, and prayer. The main object of these religious exercises was the deepening of their own spiritual life, and the strengthening of those bonds which bound them as Christians to each other. But over and above this they were much exercised in mind about the state of the Religious World. They believed in the near approach of the second Advent of our Lord, but they saw around them few visible signs of preparation for His coming. Both the Church and the sects fell far short of the ideal exhibited in the New Testament; there

was much deadness and apathy in both, and there seemed little hope of a return to a better state of things. Nor were they by any means satisfied with the results of the great religious revival, which marked the close of the last and the opening of the present century. They admired indeed the devoted piety, the self-denial, the missionary zeal, which characterised it; they heartily sympathised with its representatives in their allegiance to the fundamental verities of the faith; but the movement appeared to them to have passed over certain truths of vast importance, and so to have failed in accomplishing all the good that once lay within its power. For instance, far too little regard had been paid by it to the principle of Church unity; existing divisions had been reinforced; a new and formidable sect had arisen, and the principle of separation had in many quarters ceased to be regarded as any deviation from the Divine order. Moreover the vast amount of evangelistic work, for which the necessities of the time were calling, had led many of the

clergy to devote their attention almost exclusively to the conversion of sinners; the necessity of developing the spiritual life of the converted, and building them up on their most Holy Faith, had been too often forgotten.

Accordingly we may notice, even in the earliest writings of the Brethren, an emphatic reassertion of these portions of the truth. In their very first pamphlet, for example, which was entitled "The Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ," the existing divisions of Christendom were denounced, and the necessity of visible unity strongly urged. The centre of unity was asserted to be the death of Christ, while the Lord's Supper was set forth as its proper symbol and instrument, and accordingly a frequent celebration of that sacred rite formed from the very commencement an essential feature of the movement. In another early paper¹ we read, "At this time the Lord's purpose is to gather as well as to save, to realise unity, not merely in the

¹ Reflections on the present ruin of the Church, p. 3.

heavens, where the purposes of God shall surely be accomplished, but here on earth, by the One Spirit sent down from Heaven." In the same way the necessity of edification, or building up believers in the faith, has from the beginning held a prominent place in their teaching. Indeed the great purpose of the assembly of the Brethren has always confessedly been *not* the awakening or the conversion of sinners, but the strengthening of the saints.

The reader will recognise here some of the same elements of teaching which characterised the Church Revival of 1833, as well as the new community which arose about the same time under the auspices of Edward Irving in London. All three movements endeavoured to give prominence to these portions of the truth, and varied from each other chiefly in the widely different methods which they severally adopted for giving expression to them. The Tractarians sought both unity and edification in a restoration of primitive doctrine and discipline; the Irvingites proclaimed a new dispensation

and a revived apostolate; the method adopted by the Brethren will be described in the following pages.

At a very early period of their history the Brethren had adopted the notion, that the ministration of the Word and Sacraments was the right of all Christians independently of any ordination. The idea is said to have been first suggested by a Mr. A. N. Groves, a member of the University of Dublin, who in the course of his academical studies had arrived at this conclusion. But from whomsoever the suggestion first proceeded, it was at all events generally adopted, and became a distinguishing feature of the assemblies of the Brethren. For a time, however, the members of these assemblies did not withdraw from the communities to which they had originally belonged, but continued to frequent their churches or chapels: indeed we read of their assemblies being held at an early hour on Sundays, in order that those who wished might attend the service at the parish church. So far, then, the meetings of the Brethren had

been rather subsidiary than opposed to existing agencies, but a change in this respect was at hand. From the first there had been those among them, who had advocated entire separation from all other communities as the only true way of promoting the unity they all desired to see, and before long one of these, the late Mr. J. N. Darby, gained sufficient influence to effect this purpose. Mr. Darby had been a clergyman of the Church, and had served for some time in an Irish curacy. He had passed through other phases of belief, and had at one time been strongly attached to the Church's system, but at last he arrived at a conviction that all existing communities were hopelessly corrupt, and that it was the duty of those who desired the unity of the spirit to come out from among them and be separate. Hence it happened, that those quiet gatherings for prayer and meditation, which had at first been set on foot as helps in the spiritual life, came to be regarded by Mr. Darby and his followers as the only assemblies which were secure of the Divine Presence and

favour, the only sure rallying-point for a divided Christendom. But this complete change in the position of these assemblies was not allowed to pass without a protest. Mr. A. N. Groves, who as we have seen had heartily sympathised with the movement in its beginnings, remonstrated with Mr. Darby, and warned him, and those who sided with him, that they might expect to see the same evils, of which they had complained in other societies, springing up among themselves.

Meanwhile the movement we are describing had been making rapid progress, and had found a home in many parts of England. At Plymouth and at Teignmouth, and in various other places, similar societies had arisen. The society at Plymouth calls for especial attention, both because it eventually gave its name to the movement, and because certain events which happened there had a considerable effect upon its after history. The most prominent member of this society was Mr. Benjamin W. Newton, a man of piety and high attainments, who had received English

Orders, and been Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford. He rapidly attained great influence with the Brethren at this centre, and under him a vast amount of evangelistic work was done in Plymouth and the neighbourhood. He did not adopt in its full extent the principle of "open ministry," which was characteristic of the Brethren, but exercised a kind of presidency himself, by way of preserving order and securing edification.

In 1845 a serious dispute arose between him and Mr. Darby, who was at that time residing at Plymouth. The Brethren, both here and elsewhere, were eager students of prophecy, and a difference of opinion as to our Lord's second coming seems to have sown the seeds of discord between the two leaders. Mr. Darby had put forth the idea that the coming of Our Lord for the Saints would be secret, whereas His appearing to judge the world would be seen by all. Mr. Newton protested against these and other views, which were gaining ground among the Brethren, but it is quite clear from the various accounts

of the controversy which have been preserved, that the main cause of the rupture was the presidency exercised by Mr. Newton in the assembly. This was stigmatised as clericalism, and was regarded as a departure from the principles of the society, and even as a denial of the authority of the Holy Ghost. Accordingly Mr. Darby seceded, with about one hundred followers, and held his meeting in another part of Plymouth. Two years after this Mr. Newton was accused of heresy, on account of some statements put forth by him with respect to our Lord's sufferings and death. He had undoubtedly indulged in unauthorised speculations, and had used expressions calculated to mislead, but he afterwards candidly acknowledged himself to have been mistaken in one of his statements, and withdrew the rest for further consideration. His opponents however were not satisfied, the controversy spread, and a large number of the Brethren in every part of the country withdrew from communion with him.

It has been already mentioned that in the

early days of the movement, there was a society of the Brethren at Teignmouth. In the year 1832 those who met at that centre had removed to Bristol, where a chapel called Bethesda had been purchased for them, and here, under the leadership of Mr. Müller and Mr. Craik, they carried on their work. In 1848 the Bristol Brethren received to the Lord's Table four of Mr. Newton's friends who had remained in communion with him, not as sympathising with the views ascribed to him, but as denying that he held the doctrines laid to his charge¹. This step was denounced by Mr. Darby, who refused to hold further intercourse with Bethesda, unless indeed the brethren who met there agreed to investigate Mr. Newton's views publicly and collectively, and publicly and collectively to condemn them. Though far from sympathising with those views, or rather distinctly repudiating them, the Bristol Brethren did not feel called upon to act publicly as judges in the matter, and they published a letter, in

¹ Darbyism, p. 29.

which they gave their reasons for the course they had seen fit to pursue. The result was that they were accused of indifference to blasphemy against Christ, and were publicly excommunicated by Mr. Darby, while the same sentence was pronounced upon all assemblies throughout the country who sided with them ¹.

Henceforth the Brethren parted into two hostile camps. The followers of Messrs. Müller and Craik, under the name of Open Brethren, adhered to the principles which had animated the movement in its earliest days, holding communion with the members of other religious bodies, and maintaining the mutual independence of the different assemblies of the Brethren. They have no special form of ecclesiastical organisation. In mat-

¹ The history of this controversy may be found in the following works: Mr. Darby's "Narrative of Facts," published in his collected works; "The whole case of Plymouth and Bethesda," by W. Trotter; and "The Brethren, their Origin, Progress, and Testimony," by Andrew Miller. On the other side of the controversy the chief witnesses are—"Five Letters," by the late Dr. Tregelles; and "Darbyism, its Rise, Progress, and Development," by Henry Groves.

ters of doctrine they are many of them followers of Mr. Darby, though there is no one teacher whose authority is paramount among them.

Mr. Darby's followers, on the other hand, who now became known as Darbyites, or the Exclusive Brethren, have adopted the most rigid ideas of discipline. They are a very numerous, well-organised, and influential body. They have produced a large number of writers, by whose works the principles of Brethrenism have been disseminated far and wide. They maintain their separation from the Church and other religious bodies, though they are willing to receive individuals from among them to the Lord's Table. This privilege however is in no case extended to even "the most godly saint of a Bethesda gathering." They do a large amount of evangelistic work both by their preaching and by their writings, but their main endeavour seems to be to make proselytes from among the best members of other communities. It is their avowed object to get hold of "the saints in the

different systems, and to teach them to own and act upon the true principles of the assembly of God¹." It is with the investigation of their teaching that the following pages are chiefly concerned.

In the year 1866 a division arose in the ranks of the Darbyites. Mr. Darby had for some time been putting forth speculations as to our Saviour's sufferings, bearing a very close resemblance to those which had been so strongly condemned in Mr. Newton a few years before. Our Lord was now said to have undergone a portion of His sufferings in sympathy by anticipation with a Jewish remnant, who are to arise in the latter day, and on whom are to fall the judgments which the nation had entailed on itself by its rejection of Him. This class of sufferings Mr. Darby regarded as "non-atoning"; in enduring them our Lord was said to have passed through all the experiences of a penitent sinner! Mr. Darby indeed admitted that this theory finds no support in the New Testa-

¹ Mackintosh's "Assembly of God," pp. 24, 25.

ment. It is really founded on a perfectly arbitrary interpretation of certain passages in the Psalms¹. It was asserted, moreover, that these non-atoning sufferings were endured by our Saviour during the first three hours of His Crucifixion, the atoning sufferings occupying the last three hours; and it was further maintained that the atonement was completed before our Saviour died, and that the act of death was simply the giving up a soul that had already overcome death into His Father's hands. Against this unfounded and most erroneous teaching a strong protest was raised by some of Mr. Darby's own followers, and Mr. W. H. Dorman, Captain Percy Hall, and many others withdrew from communion with him². He was supported however by a large number of those who had hitherto followed him, and the erroneous teaching just

¹ See Mr. Darby's pamphlet on the "Sufferings of Christ," reprinted from the Bible Treasury of 1858-1859.

² An account of this controversy may be gathered from Mr. W. H. Dorman's pamphlet "The close of twenty-eight years' association with J. N. D.," and from "Darbyism, its Rise, Progress, and Development," by Henry Groves, ch. vii, as well as from Mr. Darby's own writings.

described continues to this hour to find advocates among them.

In the following pages the attention of the reader will be directed to the teaching of the Brethren : 1. As to the Church, in Chapters II and III; 2. As to the relations of the individual Christian with God, Chapters IV—VI; and with the world, Chapter VII, while Chapter VIII will be devoted to an examination of their views on Prophecy.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHURCH.

THE reader will have gathered from the preceding chapter some idea of the teaching of the Brethren ; but for a full understanding of their position it will be necessary to enter somewhat more into detail. And first as to their view of the Church. The Church, they assert, strictly so called, had no existence before Pentecost. It could not come into being till the offering of that great sacrifice which was to gather together in one the scattered children of God, or till the Spirit of grace had descended to perpetuate and apply its results among the successive generations of mankind. The presence of that Spirit became thenceforth the distinguishing characteristic of the Church, elevating her not only above all worldly societies, but above even the sacred society of God's people Israel, which

for so many ages past had prefigured her and prepared her way. On the due recognition of that Presence depended her very existence as a society, and the spiritual welfare of her individual children; on that recognition depended the efficiency of the great system of organisation which all agree was to be found in the Church in the Apostolic age.

So far indeed the teaching of the Brethren does not differ from that of the Church herself, and is fully borne out by the most express testimonies of the New Testament¹. But here we are met by the astounding assertion that this sacred society, so divine in its origin, so well provided with all that was necessary to preserve it from age to age, is in a state of hopeless irremediable corruption. It is not merely that false teaching has overlaid her doctrines, or schisms impaired her unity; it is not merely that the great mass of her children fall far short of their position and privileges, but these and other evils are held

¹ See S. Matt. xi. 11; S. John vii. 39; Hebr. xi. 40.

to have abounded in her to such an extent as to deprive her altogether as a society of the character stamped upon her at the beginning, and to bring upon her, at God's hands, the sentence of an irrevocable doom. Any attempt to restore her involves deliberate opposition to the Divine decree which demands her extirpation. The continuance of God's goodness to her was suspended from the beginning upon the condition of her continuance in His goodness; that condition, the Brethren say, has not been fulfilled, therefore her doom is sealed. Nor is this state of ruin and condemnation regarded by them as peculiar to these latter days. It has existed in a measure from the beginning. We see traces of it in the Apostolic age, and in two generations later it had already assumed that hopeless and irremediable character which has continued to this day. Nor is this complete breakdown of a society of Divine origin regarded by the Brethren as a matter of surprise. On the contrary, the analogy of former dispensations would lead us to expect it.

All alike had broken down, not after some long period of trial, but from the very commencement, and in no case had they been restored, but simply, after much endurance, replaced. When we enquire further into the causes which have led to this deplorable result in the case of the Christian Church, we are told that it arises first from the admission of the world into her pale. It was never intended, the Brethren say, that the Church should contain a mixture of good and evil. It was of course possible that from time to time a hypocrite or an unbeliever would find his way into the Divine society, but the business of the society would be to detect and to expel him ; and in proportion as she failed in doing this, she would forfeit her character as the witness and representative of Christ on earth. Now however that evil had not only effected a lodgment in the Church, but had from time to time been exalted to a position of authority, all traces of her divine original were obliterated ; she had now¹ “ through

¹ Mackintosh's “ Assembly of God,” p. 15.

Satan's crafty working, become "a corrupt mass," "an apostasy hastening to its final consummation, instead of a Church or dispensation which God is sustaining through His faithfulness of grace¹."

But there is another cause assigned by the Brethren for the failure of the Church which demands our especial attention, because their opinions on this point have had no small influence in determining the position they have seen fit to assume. "The crowning sin of Christendom," then, according to them, consists in the existence and operation of an ordained ministry. It is of course admitted, as indeed it cannot be denied, that there was a ministry appointed by the Apostles, but this they tell us belonged to the Church only while it was among the Jews, it was an earthly element in her constitution, and was intended to pass away when the Jews had finally rejected the Gospel, and the full spiritual character of the Church developed

¹ Darby on the Apostasy of the successive Dispensations. Collected Works, vol. i. p. 140.

itself under the teaching of St. Paul. That Apostle, Mr. Darby tells us, is to be regarded as the type of the dispensation which he represented; as he received his Apostolic commission "not of men nor by men, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father," so in the system introduced by Him "the Apostolic succession" was to be broken through¹, the ministers of the Church were to be chosen by the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost, no human choice concurring, no human ordination witnessing to the authoritative act of the Divine Spirit. Consequently they tell us the whole Church, from the Apostolic age till the present time, by preserving the ministerial succession has been opposing the purposes of the Most High, encroaching on the jurisdiction of the Holy Ghost, and so, as far as human power can do so, hampering His work among the sons of men.

Nor has the practical working of this unauthorised system, according to the Brethren, done anything to redeem the sinfulness of

¹ "Character of Office in the Present Dispensation," p. 19.

its origin. It has not tended to the benefit of the Church, and bears with it as an institution no sign of the blessing of the Most High. Individual cases may of course be cited where clergymen have done good, but this has been the fruit of their individual piety, not of the office they bore. As a body the clergy, Mr. Darby tells us, have been in every generation the great opponents of the work of God. They have condemned and stigmatised as schismatical every effort to promote that work, which has not emanated from themselves, and thus have acted the part of those who, when our Saviour was on earth, ascribed His miracles to Satan. A further argument against the Christian ministry is founded on the fact, that it is the means of preserving the dispensation and handing it on from age to age. The dispensation, say the Brethren, has failed; the kingdom of heaven has become an apostasy; whatever therefore tends to preserve the dispensation tends to preserve the apostasy, to maintain in existence an institution, against which the Divine sentence

has been already pronounced, and on which before long the Divine judgments will surely fall. Now, before proceeding to examine the directions the Brethren give as to the conduct of the Faithful amid this sad scene of apostasy and ruin, it will be well to enquire whether the terrible indictment which they bring against the whole Catholic Church of Christ can be sustained.

I. Is there any ground for supposing that the Church, while militant here on earth, was to contain the righteous only? So far is this from being the case, that the very opposite is asserted again and again both by our Lord and His Apostles. In our Lord's description of the kingdom of heaven in the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew, tares are sown in the midst of the wheat, the children of the wicked one are introduced by Satan *among* the children of the kingdom¹, and instead of the evil

¹ When the Brethren argue, that because "the field is the *world*," the statement of the parable as to the mingling of good and evil does not refer to the Church, they are overlooking the fact, that it is in the midst of the wheat that the

being at once judged and expelled, we are expressly told that both are to grow together until the harvest, and that the final separation between them is to be the work of the Angels at the end of the world. In the last of these parables the same truth is taught under a different figure. The draw-net encloses bad fish as well as good, and it is not till the net is full and drawn to shore that the bad are cast away. Moreover, it may be noticed, that our Lord's explanation of the former of these parables refutes by anticipation the assumption of the Brethren that the kingdom has failed. At the end of the world, He says, the Son of Man shall send forth His Angels, and they shall gather *out of His kingdom* all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. Here we are taught first that the kingdom would contain bad and good. Secondly, that the kingdom *thus consisting of bad and good* would last to the end. Thirdly, that at the end, the kingdom, instead of being judged

tares are sown, and that the things that offend and those who do iniquity are gathered "out of the kingdom."

and cast out, as the Brethren declare, would simply be purged of all things that offend, and of those who do iniquity. The same truth reappears under another form in the Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son, where, after the royal invitation has been rejected by those to whom it was first sent, the servants of the householder gathered together as many as they found, *both bad and good*. It is true we have here an instance in which the evil was judged and expelled; but that did not take place till the king came in to see the guests.

Nor did our Lord merely declare that evil would find its way into the Church. He prepared His disciples for a terrible growth and development of that evil, and foretold its disastrous effects upon those who once served Him faithfully, "because," He says, "iniquity shall abound, the love of *the many* shall wax cold." In precisely the same way we find St. Paul, in his address to the clergy of the Church of Ephesus, anticipating the growth of evil among them. "I know that after

my departure grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock, and also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them." We have, moreover, the united testimony of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. John, and St. Jude, as to the upgrowth of yet greater evils in the latter days, and yet not one word is said by any one of them to imply that the dispensation would fail, that the Divine charter of the Church would be cancelled, or the Presence of Christ be withdrawn from the work of His hands.

If, now, from the prophecy, we turn for a moment to the history of the New Testament, we see additional proofs of the fact we have been considering. The Epistles to the Corinthians, Galatians, and Colossians, bear the most emphatic testimony to the existence of grave evils both moral and spiritual *in the Church*, yet is it never asserted or implied, that the presence of those evils had deprived the societies, in which they were found, of their position as branches of the Church of Christ.

But it is perhaps in the Epistles to the seven Churches of Asia that we may find the most striking witness of all. For there we have the Son of God turning the light of His own perfect knowledge upon the secret condition of these Churches, and displaying it to them and to us. In five of these Churches evils of a terrible kind are found ; two are threatened with extirpation unless they repent ; one has only a few who have not defiled their garments ; and even in the faithful Churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia the presence of some false teachers is distinctly recognised. Yet with all these evils the merciful Head of the Church does not cast them off ; He still addresses them as *Churches*, calls on them to repent and give heed to the Spirit's voice, and meanwhile continues to hold the seven stars in His right hand, and to walk in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. It is of course fully admitted that evils may so abound as to cause the ruin of particular Churches. The testimony of Scripture and of history unite in confirming this sad truth,

but still it is quite clear from the Scriptures above cited, and from many others, that this is not and never will be the case with the dispensation at large, that "though the providence of God doth suffer many particular Churches to cease, yet the promise of the same God will never permit that all of them at once shall perish." (Bp. Pearson on the Creed, Art. ix.)

II. If now we turn to the second cause to which the Brethren ascribe the alleged ruin of the Church, viz. the existence and operation of an ordained ministry, we find their teaching on this point also equally without foundation in Scripture. The distinction they draw between St. Paul and the other Apostles cannot be sustained. The fact that he received the Apostolic commission directly from the lips of our Lord Himself, instead of distinguishing him from them, does but serve to place him, *as nothing else could have placed him*, on a level with them. "Am I not an Apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord¹?" And when we compare

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 1.

their respective histories we find a remarkable resemblance between them in their acts, in their teaching, and in their methods. Indeed it would seem to have been one object of the writer of the Acts of the Apostles to draw a parallel between St. Paul and St. Peter¹. Both restore to perfect soundness a man who had been lame from his birth; both restore to life one who had passed into the world of spirits; both confound the devices of a sorcerer, and destroy his influence with those he was about to mislead; both were miraculously delivered from prison. If the shadow of St. Peter is used by God as a means of healing the sick, we find diseases cured and evil spirits driven out by the use of napkins and aprons brought from the body of St. Paul. Each Apostle begins his ministry among the Jews; each is led by a vision from God to open the door of faith to the Gentiles; each declares to Jew and Gentile

¹ Compare Acts iii. 2 with Acts xiv. 8; Acts ix. 40 with Acts xx. 9, 10; Acts viii. 20 with Acts xiii. 9, 10; Acts v. 19 with Acts xvi. 26; Acts v. 15 with Acts xix. 11, 12.

that forgiveness of sins is secured through Jesus Christ to all who believe¹. In St. Paul's address to the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia we may notice a recurrence to some of the same arguments which had been employed by St. Peter in his Pentecostal Sermon. In St. Peter's address to the Gentile Cornelius, we find that same declaration of Divine impartiality² which was in after days so emphatically repeated by St. Paul, the same reference to our blessed Lord as the Judge of mankind which finds a place in the speech of St. Paul at Athens. But we need not pursue this portion of the parallel further. Enough has been said to show the groundlessness of Mr. Darby's strange idea, that St. Paul is to be regarded as the founder of a new dispensation of a more heavenly character than that which had grown up in Jerusalem under "the twelve Jewish Apostles." And if from his teaching we turn to the methods of St. Paul in carrying out his work, we find the same resemblance

¹ Compare Acts x. 10 with Acts xxii. 21.

² Compare Acts x. 34 with Romans ii. 11.

still maintained. If there are elders and deacons serving under the twelve in the Church at Jerusalem, we find elders and deacons also in the Churches founded by St. Paul. Nay, the Apostle, so far from expecting that all the ministers of Christ would have a miraculous call like his own, or would owe their appointment to the immediate act of the Holy Ghost without any human agency, was in the habit of himself appointing elders in every Church, and frequent allusions to these and other Church officers are to be found scattered up and down his Epistles. In some of the latest of them in particular, namely those addressed to Timothy and Titus, to whom the Apostle had given jurisdiction over the Churches of Ephesus and Crete respectively, we find detailed regulations as to the character and qualifications required in those who would be admitted to these offices. Nay, Titus was left in Crete for the very purpose of appointing elders in every city, while the exhortation to lay hands suddenly on no man, to commit

the charge which he had himself received to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also, is a proof that the same power was conferred on Timothy. Thus do we find the Apostle not only instituting these orders in the Churches which he founded, but also providing for their continuance. Nor are we to suppose because the elders of the Apostolic Churches received their orders through a human channel, that the source from which they came was other than divine. On the contrary, the elders of the Church of Ephesus are reminded by the Apostle that the Holy Ghost had made them overseers in the flock, and in the Epistle addressed to that Church at a later period all the various offices belonging to the Christian ministry, the lowest as well as the highest, are traced up to those gifts unto men which His ascended Head poured forth upon His Church.

But here the Brethren tell us that they do not deny the power of the Apostle, or of those immediately commissioned by him, to ordain men to these offices, they only deny the

power of subsequent generations to continue them. In other words, they maintain that a system of Church organisation confessedly established by the Apostles, witnessed to by their writings, and for the continuance of which they had provided, was meant to collapse entirely in the third generation, and to be succeeded by another system utterly unlike it. But we are entitled on their own principles to enquire what Scriptural warrant they have for this extraordinary statement, and if no Scriptural warrant can be produced for this radical change in the Church's constitution, we are again, on their own principles, driven to the conclusion that no such change was intended to take place.

Scripture, indeed, is far from countenancing any such idea. On the contrary it assumes, that those to whom Christ committed the task of evangelising the nations would, in the persons of their representatives, continue the work till the end of the world. Nay, it distinctly asserts by the mouth of St. Paul himself, that the ministry which received

Christ's gifts at Pentecost would continue their appointed labours "till all Christ's faithful followers should come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Ephesians iv. 11-13.)

It is clear, then, from the above considerations that instead of being opposed to the "successional arrangement" which prevailed at Jerusalem, St. Paul adopted it in those portions of the Church which were committed to his care. It evidently never occurred to him that in doing so he was founding an organisation which would eventually prove the ruin of the dispensation, and that an attempt to continue from age to age the system which he had begun would constitute in after days "the crowning sin of Christendom." St. Paul of course was perfectly aware of the evils which would arise, if those who had received this ministry proved unfaithful either in doctrine or in life; nay, himself, as we have seen, warns the Ephesian elders that

from their own ranks¹ false teachers would arise, but he seeks to forestall those evils, not by abolishing the ministry he had instituted, and introducing in its room another system, but simply by urging on its present representatives the zealous pursuit of their ministerial duties, a careful remembrance of his warnings and example, and then by commending them to God and the word of His grace (Acts xx. 29-32).

¹ ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν, Acts xx. 30.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RESOURCE OF THE FAITHFUL AMID THE RUIN OF THE CHURCH.

WE have next to consider the course prescribed by the Brethren to all those who are sensible of the ruined fallen state of Christendom.

The first step that they insist on is entire separation from the Church and all other Christian societies. This is of course a necessary consequence of the view they take of the state of those societies. The arguments against separation, which may be fairly urged in dealing with the members of other sects, have no place here. If universal Christendom is in a state of utter condemnation, if the fires of divine wrath are destined shortly to consume it, separation becomes not only lawful but necessary. It is worse than useless, it is sinful to remain in a society, which lies

under a Divine sentence, and accordingly the very first requisition of the Brethren is "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." It is admitted, indeed, that individuals who abide in "the ruin" may be saved at last, but by "touching the unclean thing" they deprive themselves of the fulness of Gospel privileges, and especially of that great blessing of visible unity which Christendom at large has forfeited for ever.

But separation of itself is not enough, it has in it no uniting power. Some positive principle is needed to secure the cohesion of those who have withdrawn from the corrupt mass. Accordingly, the Brethren fall back on certain truths fully recognised by the Church, and seek in separation from her for that which might have been sought and found in union with her. "Christ," they say, with perfect truth, "is the true centre of unity. He is the Object of the Divine Counsel, the manifestation of God Himself, the one only vessel of mediatorial power entitled to unite the Church as its Redeemer, its Head, its

glory, its life." But further we need, they say, not merely a centre of unity round which to gather, but also a power to gather us to that centre; and this power they find truly enough in the Holy Ghost. "He has come down from Heaven," they say, "to separate a peculiar people out of the world to Christ, and to dwell amongst them, God thus dwelling and walking in them." In making these statements the Brethren are but echoing the voice of Universal Christendom, for no truths have obtained more general recognition than those just named.

But having abandoned the divinely constituted society in which the expression of these truths has ever been found by those who sought it, they are obliged to seek for their realisation by a method of their own: casting aside every form of ecclesiastical organisation, whether instituted by God, or invented by man, they profess to meet in the power of the Holy Ghost round the person of Christ, and thus to worship and hold communion with the Father. In the assembly,

when gathered on these principles, and for this purpose, the Holy Ghost is said to preside. He is the true representative of Christ, the sole teacher of spiritual truth, the sole dispenser of the instruction, comfort, and warning, which the assembly may require, and He knows, as none else can know, the personal needs of those who meet there. To Him therefore belongs the work of supplying those needs. It is a profane encroachment upon this His Office, according to the Brethren, to appoint a man to do these things. It is profane to appoint a man to keep order in such assemblies, for the assembly is the House of God, and God must be trusted to keep order in His own house¹. When we first read sentiments such as these, we are naturally led to suppose that the Brethren intend to dispense with human agency altogether. But this is far from being the case. What they mean is, that the Holy Ghost is to select

¹ "The Assembly of God," p. 27: "To set up a man to keep order in God's assembly is sheer unbelief, and an open insult to the Divine Presence."

each time the assembly meets the person or persons by whom He wills to convey the necessary instruction. All indeed have in theory an equal right to minister, but practically this right is limited by the guiding will of the Spirit. But how is that will to be known? Chiefly by the gifts which the different Brethren possess. The power to exhort, to warn, to console, to expound, are regarded as so many distinct gifts of the Spirit. Wherever any of these gifts is found, the possessor is bound to use them for the benefit of the assembled brethren, and the assembly, on the other hand, is bound to recognise them. The presence of the gift is one sure mark at least of the will of the Spirit. Still, a further practical difficulty remains; who is to decide whether this or that brother possesses the requisite gift? It will scarcely do to let him decide himself, for there are few subjects on which men are more liable to be deceived than as to their possession of such powers as these; indeed, the results which have sometimes followed,

when the experiment has been tried, have not been such as to justify the trial. Consequently, as a general rule, when any difficulty arises, the decision of the matter is left with the assembly. By its collective voice the will of the Spirit, who presides therein, is supposed to be known, and thus, though the assembly does practically in these cases elect its own ministers for the time being, the election is regarded as not man's but God's¹.

But instruction is neither the only nor the chief purpose for which the assembly comes together. Its main object is worship, and its central act is the breaking of bread. The conversion of sinners is a work with which the assembly, when convened, has nothing to do. Those who meet there are supposed to have been already converted, and to have simply to maintain the relations with God and with each other into which they have entered. As regards worship, the Brethren

¹ Kelly's six lectures on "Fundamental Truths connected with the Church of God," Lect. iii.

observe the same principle which regulates their ministry, viz. that no human president is to be appointed. The Holy Spirit, in this case as in that, is supposed to select those who shall lead. "The essential thing," says Mr. Kelly¹, "is this, that there be perfect openness for the Spirit's action by whom He is pleased to speak. It is not a question of one man or of half-a-dozen. On some occasions the Holy Ghost might use one or two, on others more than six, in various ways. What Scripture demands is that there be faith in the Spirit's presence, proved by leaving Him His due right to employ as it may please Him."

The Brethren lay great stress on the Lord's Supper as an essential part of the worship of the assembly—partly as a symbol of Christian union, partly as an appointed means of showing the Lord's death. "Beware," says Mr. Kelly², "of thinking anything can be of equal moment with duly showing forth the

¹ Kelly's six lectures, Lect. iv. p. 144.

² Ibid. Lect. iv. p. 150.

Lord's death. The Supper of the Lord claims an unequivocal prominence in the worship of the Saints." They insist on a weekly celebration of this high ordinance, grounding their practice on the statement of Acts xx. 7. "It is the resurrection day," says Mr. Kelly¹, "not the day of His death . . . He is risen, and therefore with grateful solemn joy we take the Supper on that day which speaks of His rising power." Again, "The all-important thing is that the Lord's Supper should be the governing thought, when the Saints are gathered for this purpose on the Lord's Day." Nor do they allow the members of their society under any pretence to neglect this ordinance. "There is no excuse for absenting yourself from the Lord's Table." "He who abstains from the Lord's Supper virtually says he is none of His."

Further, the assembly is under the strictest discipline. Any allowance of evil, whether of doctrine or life, if persevered in after remonstrance, is judged and condemned, and

¹ Kelly's six lectures, Lect. iii. p. 144.

the author of it expelled from the assembly. This is of course a necessary result of their distinctive principles. They could not advocate separation from other religious bodies on the ground that those bodies tolerated evil, and then tolerate evil themselves.

It is not supposed, of course, that the assembly is perfect at any time. Some of its members may be ignorant, others may have been newly received, and may introduce into the assembly the effects of the system to which they previously belonged, and, even among those, who have received all their religious training among the Brethren, there may be some, we are told, who may have "no deep sense of the ruin of Christendom," and who may be inclined to accept the Brethren's position as a matter of course, without any "divine conviction" that it is the only true one. But all this may be borne with. It does not hinder the presence and operation of the Spirit. But where a brother has been guilty of error in doctrine or viciousness in life, where he has refused to submit to the Word of God as that

Word is understood by the Brethren, or to recognise the distinctive tenets for which they contend, there the course of the assembly is clear. It must without hesitation exclude the offender. For the toleration of known evil "is the direct denial of the Presence of the Holy Ghost making them one, and the authority of a present Lord." And accordingly, if an assembly declines to take this course, if it throws the shield of its protection over the wrong-doer, it robs itself of its true character as God's assembly, and forces a painful but highly necessary duty upon its faithful members. They must first of all, of course, give full testimony to what they believe to be the truth, they must administer due warning to the assembly and to individuals; but if all has been in vain, separation from that assembly becomes absolutely binding. Indeed, the duty of withdrawing from an assembly of the Brethren which has tolerated evil, is regarded as even more imperative than that of separating from the ordinary ecclesiastical institutions of Christendom, since

light rejected is worse than original darkness.

Such, then, are the main characteristics of the assemblies of the Brethren; such their principles, their methods, their discipline. We have next to observe that for these assemblies, thus isolated from the whole of Christendom, thus bereft of all the visible organisation which characterised the Apostolic Church, the Brethren claim a right to all the promises which were made to that Church. Ask them where they find an authority in Scripture for the isolated institution they have founded, and they refer you at once to our Lord's promise to St. Peter in St. Matthew xvi. 18, "Upon this rock I will build my assembly, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Ask them where they find the proof in Scripture of the existence of any such assembly, and the reply is—The Lord added to the assembly daily such as should be saved. And in every passage in the New Testament where the expression *ecclesia* occurs the Brethren see, or

think they see, an allusion to the special kind of assembly which they have instituted. Take the following specimen from Mr. Mackintosh¹: "In the Gospel our Blessed Lord intimates His purpose of building an assembly. This assembly is historically presented to us in the Acts of the Apostles. Then, when we turn to the Epistles of St. Paul, we find him addressing the assembly in seven distinct places; and finally, in the opening of the Book of Revelation, we have addresses to seven distinct assemblies."

But here a difficulty arises. If the assemblies of the Brethren are the only true representatives of the primitive Apostolic Church, where are we to find a true expression of the assembly from the Apostolic age to the nineteenth century, seeing that the peculiar form which it has taken among the Brethren is quite unknown to Church history? But the Brethren are not careful to answer us in this matter. "It matters but little to us," they tell us, "if ecclesiastical historians have failed

¹ Mackintosh's "Assembly of God," p. 11.

in their interesting researches to discern a single trace of the true expression of God's assembly from the close of the Apostolic era to the beginning of the present century. It is quite possible there may have been here and there, amid the thick gloom of the Middle Ages, 'two or three' really gathered in the Name of Jesus, or at least those that sighed after the truth of such a thing. But, be this as it may, it leaves that truth wholly untouched. . . . Although it could be proved that for eighteen hundred years there were not even two or three gathered in the Name of Jesus, that would not in the smallest degree affect the question. The word is not 'What saith the ecclesiastical historian?' but, 'What saith the Scripture¹?'"

It is clear, then, that the history of Christendom for eighteen centuries affords no encouragement to the theories of the Brethren, or at least none that they think it worth their while to avail themselves of. But we have seen already there is one point at least

¹ Mackintosh's "Assembly of God," p. 43.

on which Scripture and ecclesiastical history speak with one voice. Both alike bear witness to the existence in the ancient Church of an order of men, deriving their authority from an Apostolic source, whose special work it was "to feed the flock of God," "to take oversight thereof," "to labour in the word and doctrine," "to rule over their brethren," "to watch for their souls;" and if this be indeed the united testimony of Scripture and of history, do not the Brethren, in rejecting the latter on this point, oppose themselves also to the former? If Church history tells us that these orders remained, if in Scripture we find provision made for their continuance, does not the testimony of Scripture and of history point once more in the same direction?

But notwithstanding the weight of the Scriptural argument against them, the Brethren still believe themselves to have discovered an authority for their assembly in the pages of the New Testament. They fall back on the regulations made by St. Paul in the

First Epistle to the Corinthians for the public exercise of the miraculous gifts. Here, they say, we read of no president, no one-man ministry. Each is exhorted to use whatever gift he possesses for the common good: no restriction is laid upon them, save that all things are to be done in order, and with a view to edification. Accordingly, they assume that we have here the true expression of the assembly of God. The organisation confessedly existing in other places was to pass away, but this was to remain. But a moment's consideration will shew how little ground they have for such an assumption.

The regulations laid down in 1 Cor. xiv have reference to a state of things which no longer exists. Christians no longer possess the miraculous endowments which the Corinthians and other early Christians enjoyed; and therefore directions given to regulate the exercise of such endowments have no necessary application to us. To assume the perpetual obligation of rules, which had reference to a state of things long passed away, is a

course utterly opposed to all sound reasoning; but this is not the only assumption necessary to their position. The directions given by St. Paul in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus, as to the duties of elders and deacons, as well as to those belonging to themselves as placed in authority over them, have reference to a state of things which will last as long as the world lasts. The duties, for instance, of taking care of the Church of God, of restraining false teachers, of holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, of labouring in the word and doctrine, are duties which have their place in every generation, and can never be neglected without serious damage to the Church. The Church officers mentioned in these Epistles were set apart to perform these duties, and the rules laid down therein were meant to secure their efficient performance. Now we have already seen that the Brethren assume that this elaborate organisation was to pass away.

In a word, they assume the permanence of a system, which had reference to a state

of things which exists no more. They assume the transitoriness of a system adapted to a state of things, which exists in every age; and on these two absurd and self-contradictory assumptions rests their so-called argument from Scripture for the entirely modern system they have thought fit to introduce. Surely we can scarcely have a stronger argument against their whole position, than that with which they themselves have furnished us in the expedients to which they have been driven in order to justify it.

While, however, we reject entirely the novel system they have introduced, we have no desire to pass by unheeded the undoubted truths, which they have enshrined in it. Their recognition of the Lord's Supper as the central act of Christian worship is a point in which they are favourably distinguished from some other communities. We willingly admit, moreover, that far more discipline is needed in the Church. Our own Church, in the opening sentences of her Communion Service, expresses her de-

sire for it. We admit also, that more scope should be given to those who possess high spiritual gifts and graces, to use them for the glory of God, and the good of the Church. But this principle is expressly admitted in the second Collect for Good Friday, while the continual developement of lay agency in the Church is giving year by year a more emphatic expression to it. Had the Brethren simply called our attention to these undoubted facts, they would have been doing good service. But one great fallacy of Brethrenism lies in the assumption, that separation is the first step towards the restoration of these advantages. If, however, as has been shewn in the former chapter, the Church is to abide to the end of the world, if the presence of the Lord has been expressly promised to her ministry for "all the" intervening "days¹," then it will follow, that whatever blessings Christians may require for their individual growth in grace, for their corporate unity, or for the advancement of Christ's work in the

¹ "Always," "all the days," St. Matth. xxviii. 20.

world, are to be sought for in communion with her, not in separation from her. In that Church Christ is indeed "the centre to which His people are gathered, and the Holy Ghost is the power which gathers them to that centre." All therefore that Churchmen have to do is to make full proof of these their privileges, and then all else that is needful for them will, in God's good time, be conferred upon them.

CHAPTER V.

JUSTIFICATION.

FROM the views of the Brethren concerning the Church, we must now turn to their teaching as to the relations of the individual with God. This part of our enquiry will naturally fall under three heads, Justification, Sanctification, and the Christian's Rule of Life. These subjects, therefore, will claim our attention in this and the two following chapters. And first, as to Justification.

I. The Brethren hold, in common with the rest of Christendom, that justification, which includes pardon and acceptance, is a gift of God purchased for man by the meritorious Cross and Passion of our Blessed Saviour, and conferred by the Spirit of Grace on all who believe. These truths are asserted by them with an emphasis and an earnestness which leaves nothing to be desired; their

frank and unreserved recognition of them accounts for much of their influence on the religious life of the present day, and if in the details of their teaching on this wide subject we find some things which we are compelled to criticise severely, these main points of agreement must never be forgotten.

II. But further, they have done good service in bringing out into a clear strong light one aspect of the doctrine of justification, which some previous systems had lost sight of, viz. the close connection of this great gift with the resurrection of our Lord. Believing, as we have said, that His sufferings and death are the meritorious causes of our justification, they hold at the same time that our personal possession of this privilege arises from our union with Him in resurrection. "We are justified," they tell us, "in the Risen Christ¹." On this point they have been misunderstood by some of their opponents, who speak of the prominence given by them to the Resurrection,

¹ See a tract entitled "Justification in the Risen Christ," by C. S. Stanley.

as though it involved a depreciation of the work which was done upon the Cross. The following quotations will prove that they are in little danger of falling into error on this head; while at the same time they shew the exact place assigned by them to the resurrection in the economy of Redemption.

One of their writers says, "What the Blood of Christ procures, the Resurrection formally proclaims on God's part, and we enjoy in consequence, and as expressive of this, the moral value which attaches to the present position of Christ, and of all God's acts towards Him from the Cross onwards; for such is the effect of His having become our Representative before God, taking our place that He might give us His¹." And again, "In the death of Christ we have passed through the judgment of sin, and in His Resurrection we have the witness that we are free from it and in full acceptance before God²." While Mr. Darby says, "The Blood of Christ and not our

¹ "Justification and Acceptance with God," p. 54.

² Ibid. p. 56.

sins is before the eyes of God. He esteems us as bought with the price of His Blood, but the saints are also looked at as risen in Christ¹." And again, "The Saints are regarded by God as risen in Christ, and consequently as perfectly justified from all their sins; but how does the Saint actually now participate in blessings so great? It is by partaking of that life in the power of which Christ has risen . . . thus it is I share in the righteousness of God, by being quickened with that life in the power of which Christ was raised from the dead, coming up out of the grave, all our trespasses being forgiven²." In all this there is nothing which detracts from the value or the dignity of the sacrifice offered upon the Cross. On the contrary, it is but an echo of the teaching of St. Paul, who uniformly represents our union with Christ dead and risen again as the condition of our participation in the blessings purchased for us by His Cross and Passion. Indeed the

¹ "The Resurrection the Fundamental Truth of the Gospel," pp. 6, 7.

² Ibid. p. 8.

last passage quoted from Mr. Darby is little more than a paraphrase of Colossians ii. 11-13, where the Apostle distinctly asserts our union with Christ in His Death and Resurrection to be the secret of our freedom from "the body of the sins of the flesh," and the condition of our participation in that pardon which was purchased by His sufferings. Again, a connection between our justification and the Resurrection of our Lord is distinctly asserted in the following passages. In Rom. iv. 23-25, after dwelling on that faith of Abraham in the Divine Promise which was counted to him for righteousness or justification, the Apostle goes on to declare that the like blessing will be bestowed on all who believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, "who," the Apostle adds, "was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification¹." Here we have justifying faith identified with a belief in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and our justification represented

¹ See also Rom. viii. 33, 34, "Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again."

as one of the objects for which He rose from the dead. While in 1 Cor. xv. 17 the dependence of our justification on the Resurrection as an essential condition is strongly asserted in the words, "If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins," i. e. unjustified.

A remarkable resemblance may be traced between the treatises of the Brethren on this particular point and some of the writings of the Tractarian school; so much so, that one of their critics¹ has not hesitated to assert, that they derive their doctrine on this point from Dr. Newman.

This, however, is more than doubtful, but we may fairly recognise in the statements of both schools evident traces of a reaction against the defective teaching which had long been popular, and of a genuine desire to bring out in a clear strong light a forgotten portion of the truth. The evidence-writers of the last century had indeed laid great stress upon

¹ See "British Quarterly Review" for October 1873, p. 409 *note*.

the Resurrection of our Lord, but they had regarded it chiefly in its evidential character as a proof of His Divine Sonship, of the acceptance of His sacrifice, as a fact which, once admitted as historically true, destroyed all *a priori* presumption against miracles. But while these very important aspects of the Resurrection had been brought into great prominence, its place in the economy of Redemption implied in the words "Risen with Christ," "saved by His Life," "the power of His Resurrection," had been too often lost sight of; nor did the evangelical movement do much to restore it to its proper position. The main efforts of its representatives were directed to the re-assertion of the doctrine of the Atonement, and when the Resurrection was referred to, it was regarded either in the aspects above mentioned, or as a pledge of our own resurrection. About fifty years ago, however, fresh attention was directed to this Article of our faith, and its bearing both on Christian privilege and Christian life was strongly insisted on. All the three religious movements

which arose at that period bore traces of this reaction. To what school or to what writer we are indebted for having raised the question it may be difficult to say, but it is at all events due to the Brethren to recognise the share they have had in reinstating this central truth in the position claimed for it by St. Paul.

III. But there is another portion of our Saviour's work on our behalf which bears very closely upon our justification, but to which the Brethren have certainly not assigned its proper position, viz. His obedience to the law of God during His earthly life. This they declare has nothing to do with our justification, which rests solely on His sufferings and death on the Cross. It is evident to any one who examines their writings that their statements on the subject are the result of a recoil from the teaching of the Puritan Divines of the seventeenth century, and of some of their successors in the present day¹. A glance at that teaching will therefore be

See "The Righteousness of God," by J. N. D., pp. 2, 3; and "Justification and Acceptance with God," Introduction, p. xi.

necessary to enable us to understand the position taken up by the Brethren. The Puritan Divines had drawn a broad distinction between forgiveness of sins and justification, representing the first as consisting simply in the rescinding of the sentence of condemnation, and the second as involving the restoration of the pardoned man to a state of acceptance and privilege. Not content, however, with drawing this distinction thus broadly, they went on to refer these two gifts to different portions of the work of Christ on our behalf. The forgiveness of our sins they ascribed to His sufferings and death on the Cross; while our justification was said to consist in the imputation to us of His active righteousness, i. e. of His obedience to God's law during His earthly life. Against this attempt to divide the work of Christ the Brethren have raised an emphatic protest. They appeal to those passages in the New Testament which ascribe our justification to Christ's death. They assert that there is not one which ascribes it to what the Puritans called His

active righteousness apart from His death. They appeal to the teaching of the early reformers, who identified justification with forgiveness, and thus, by anticipation, struck at the root of that distinction, on which the Puritan teaching is based. They point out, that the imputation of righteousness is an expression explained by St. Paul himself to signify the non-imputation of sin¹: "David describeth the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose unrighteousnesses are forgiven,—Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin;" and they infer, that St. Paul's language about imputation can never be pressed into the service of the system they are opposing; and lastly, they protest² against the distinction drawn by the Puritans between our Saviour's active and passive obedience, as implying a forgetfulness that the surrender of His life was entirely voluntary, and done as an act of obedience to His Father.

¹ Romans iv. 6-8.

² "Justification and Acceptance with God," p. 21.

But, unfortunately, in their eager zeal to overthrow a system of teaching which seems to them to detract from the incommunicable glories of the Cross, they have allowed themselves to drift into an error in the opposite direction, and have not ascribed to our Saviour's obedience to God's law that position which is its due. One of them¹ tells us, that our Saviour's undertaking the fulfilment of the law formed "no integral part of that work by which we are saved," and Mr. Darby² gives us one of the arguments on which this view is supposed to rest: "If righteousness come by law, then Christ is dead in vain. But if Christ has fulfilled the law for me, it does come by law, and Christ is dead in vain." In another part of the same pamphlet he quotes Rom. iii. 21, "Now the righteousness of God *without law* is made manifest," as a proof that our Saviour's fulfilment of the law has nothing to do with our justification. There is no thought, he says³, in St. Paul's

¹ "Justification and Acceptance with God," p. 14.

² "Righteousness of God," p. 33. ³ Ibid, p. 9.

doctrine "of a righteousness of law acquired by another for us;" while another writer, dwelling on the same passage, says, "The Apostle brings in the question of the righteousness of God, contrasting it with law in a way which shows that he could have no idea of its being accomplished by the fulfilling of the law even by Christ Himself." Thus our Blessed Saviour's obedience to the law, while admitted as a fact, is allowed little or no place in His Redeeming work. But there is more than one fallacy underlying the reasoning of the Brethren on this point.

(1) They do not lay sufficient stress upon the fact, that our Saviour's fulfilment of the law was an essential qualification for the work which He did upon the Cross. "He was a Lamb without blemish and without spot." "He was clearly void of sin both in His flesh and in His spirit." He offered to God upon the Cross a life which had been absolutely, from the beginning, free from even a thought or desire at variance with His Holy Law, and but for this perfect conformity,

this perfect legal righteousness, as the Brethren call it, His offering could not have been acceptable to God or have availed for the justification of man.

(2) They do not seem fully to realise the fact, that that Death to which they rightly ascribe our justification, was itself in the very highest sense a fulfilling of the law. Never was the law of God fulfilled by our blessed Lord more completely than when He became obedient unto death. For then that love to God and man, which is the fulfilling of the law, received its most perfect and transcendent illustration; then all those claims of God and man, of which the law is the expression, met with a full and entire satisfaction, and, accordingly, the death of Christ is recognised in this as well as in other lights in Scripture itself: "Thy law is within My heart" are the words in which He Himself announced by the mouth of the Psalmist His willingness to offer Himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world. And therefore, when the Brethren attempt to teach us, that our justification is

in such a sense apart from law as to be independent even of our Saviour's fulfilment of the law, they are not merely depriving His daily obedience of its proper place in the economy of Redemption, they are virtually striking against that very truth of which they claim to be the special champions. For if the death of Christ was indeed a fulfilling of the law, and our justification is entirely independent of His fulfilling of the law, what is the conclusion which follows, but that our justification must be entirely independent of His death?

(3) It is perfectly clear from the context of the passage quoted above, that when the Apostle speaks of righteousness being apart from law, he is not excluding the legal obedience of our Saviour, but simply our own legal obedience from the work of justification. The reason why the law cannot justify man, is because man has not kept the law. All the world is *guilty* before God, therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. This reasoning of course cannot be applied to

our Saviour, who is *not* guilty before God, and *has* kept the law.

IV. Further, the Brethren maintain, that the gift of justification once received can never be finally lost. Once united to Christ we are in no further danger of drawing back to perdition: whatever sin or failure there may be in our course, our salvation is secure. Nay, to such an extent do some of them carry their view of the indefectibility of justifying grace, that they do not scruple to teach, that a Christian ought not to pray for the forgiveness of his sins, since such a prayer would imply a doubt of the fulness of that mercy which he has already received. In a tract entitled "Once Purged," one of their writers says, that a Christian ought not to speak of himself as a guilty sinner, or to ask that his sins may be washed in the blood of Jesus. "Is this," he says, "the language of a purged worshipper? Surely not. A guilty sinner is not a purged worshipper. It may sound like humility, but it is the very opposite. True humility can only flow from our being in our right position

before God." He then proceeds to define the right position of a believer as that of "a perfectly purged worshipper—one who has no more conscience of sins—one who is as free from every charge of guilt and every breath of condemnation as Christ" (pp. 2 and 3). And again: "Am I to be continually asking God to do what He assures me again and again He has done 'once'—done 'perfectly'—done 'for ever' "? (p. 5.) This teaching he bases mainly on Hebrews x. 2, where it is asserted that the worshippers once purged by a perfect sacrifice would have no more conscience of sins.

But a glance at the context will shew that the subject chiefly present to the sacred writer's mind in this part of his epistle is not forgiveness of sin, but *offering for sin*. In the passage more immediately referred to he is proving the imperfection of the Levitical offerings from the repetition of them. Had they been able to make the worshippers perfect, i. e. to cleanse their consciences, they need not have been repeated, since a single *offering* would have been sufficient to secure that freedom of

conscience which is necessary for approaching God. Purged by that one offering, they would have been purged once for all, so as to need no further *offering for sin*. In vv. 12-14 he points out that the sacrifice of our Lord was *therefore* not repeated, because His one offering purchased for His people a full supply of all their spiritual needs. Nothing could be gained by a second offering, which the first had not already secured for those who are being sanctified.

The Brethren in their reasoning on these passages confound atonement with forgiveness, the *offering* of the sacrifice with the *application* of it. That atonement was made, that sacrifice was offered once for all, but the application of it to the individual Christian may be repeated according to his needs (1 St. John ii. 1, 2); and as there is no Christian who does not daily come short of his position and privileges, so there is none who does not need a daily application of the benefits of that sacrifice. The writer indeed, who has been quoted above, admits that a Christian often falls into sin,

but he still maintains that he is not to pray for pardon. He is to judge himself continually, he is to confess his sins, but he is not to ask to be forgiven. But (1) by admitting that a Christian needs continual cleansing, the writer destroys the argument based upon his own interpretation of the words "once purged;" (2) to confess our sins in reliance on the Divine promise of forgiveness and of cleansing (1 St. John i. 9) is practically to pray for forgiveness. (3) Our Lord, who won for us the right of approaching God and calling Him "Our Father," has also taught us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses."

V. There is one more point in their doctrine of justification, in which the Brethren have widely diverged from the teaching of Scripture and of the ancient Church. That union with Christ in His Death and Resurrection, which has been already spoken of as involving justification, is closely connected in Apostolic teaching with the Holy Ordinance of Baptism¹. When a Jew or heathen had heard

¹ Rom. vi. 3, 4; Col. ii. 12.

the tidings of God's wrath against sin, and of His abounding mercy for penitent sinners, when the Spirit of Grace had wrought within his heart "repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," a further step was invariably required of him. The conscience-stricken Jews, who on the great day of Pentecost listened to St. Peter's sermon, and enquired "what shall we do"? were told not only to repent, but also to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins¹. The deeply penitent Saul of Tarsus, after his three days of prayer and fasting, was directed "to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins²." Here we see remission of sins (and justification, as has been seen, if not identical with it, is inseparable from it), conveyed to those who believe by an appointed visible sign, while in the Epistle to Titus, iii. 5, the very purpose of our admission to the bath of regeneration is said to be, "that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

¹ Acts ii. 38.

² Acts xxii. 16.

Accordingly, to one who in penitence and faith approached that Holy Sacrament, his baptism was at once the instrument and the seal of his justification, because it was the ordained means of bringing him into union with Him, who “of God is made righteousness” to all who believe. Nor was the significance or the efficacy of this high ordinance one whit diminished, when its grace and privilege were extended to those, whom our Saviour¹ honoured with so gracious a welcome while He was on earth, and to whom He so expressly threw open the doors of His kingdom. The analogy, both of the Patriarchal and the Mosaic dispensation, would inevitably lead to the conclusion, that God was willing to receive infants into covenant with Him. The practice among the Jews in our Saviour’s time, of baptizing the children of proselytes, would seem to show that they at least had drawn this conclusion; while our Saviour’s words of loving welcome, and His declaration, that of such was the kingdom of God, would

¹ St. Mark x. 14-16.

remove all scruple arising from the idea, that the blessings of that kingdom were too great to be bestowed on such as they. And accordingly, the Church has ever held that baptism to an infant is all that it is to a penitent believing adult. To the one as to the other it is the "bath of regeneration," the instrument of justification, the outward seal and channel of that heavenly grace, which at once blots out our sins, and secures for us a definite position of favour and acceptance before God.

Now the Brethren in dealing with this question leave the ordinance of baptism completely out of sight. Indeed, it has in their system no settled place whatever; some of them have not scrupled to assert that, though it formed an integral portion of the "Gospel of the kingdom" committed to "the twelve Jewish Apostles," it had no recognised place in the "Gospel of the Grace of God," which was proclaimed by St. Paul, though in this case it is rather strange, that our knowledge of the nature and efficacy of that Holy Ordinance

is derived chiefly from St. Paul's writings; others consider it a matter to be settled between an Evangelist and his convert. Mr. Mackintosh in his "Christian Baptism, what is it? A Scriptural Inquiry," regards it indeed as an ordinance of Christ, binding on all believers, as a means of acknowledging our relations with the Holy Trinity, as a type of our death and resurrection with Christ; but while admitting, that it has a great practical bearing as a call to newness of life, he does not ascribe to it any spiritual efficacy whatever. On the subject of Infant Baptism the Brethren are not agreed; some, particularly among the earlier members of the society, upheld it, but the generality are opposed to it; and indeed, if Baptism is not regarded as the ordained means of admission into the privileges of the Christian Covenant, it is hard to see on what grounds its application to infants can be defended, or what possible good could result from it.

But their refusal to give to Holy Baptism its proper position in relation to justification,

besides being wrong in itself, has had a most injurious effect upon their practical teaching. For rejecting the ordained "means whereby" men are admitted to the enjoyment of Gospel privilege, the ordained "pledge to assure them thereof," they are driven to look about them for other means and other pledges, and the result for the most part is, that they fix upon some moment of awakened religious consciousness as the period when they pass from death unto life. Till that moment arrives, every effort after holiness must fail, nay, such efforts are not without presumption, such "doing ends in death." So the practical result is, that the many, who have not experienced this conscious awakening are encouraged in spiritual sloth, under the idea that they have not yet received regenerating grace, while the few, who have had these experiences, are led to place far too much confidence in them, as setting them free for ever from the condemnation of the law, and assuring them of their eventual place in Christ's kingdom of glory.

Far different from this has been the method

of the Church of Christ. Relying fully on the promises of God made to us in Baptism, and recognising gladly that gracious welcome, whereby our Saviour Christ has called the young children to the privileges of His kingdom, the Church has ever taught each baptized child to regard himself from his earliest days as the object of God's covenanted favour, as blessed with the presence of His Spirit, as possessing by virtue of His union with Christ a title to the heavenly inheritance. And thus, instead of waiting for some future period of possible illumination, as the only trustworthy pledge of his admission into the Divine covenant, he is encouraged to regard the blessings of that covenant as already his own, and to make full proof of the privilege and grace he has received by running with patience the race that is set before him. This frank recognition, moreover, of the reality and efficacy of baptismal grace gives point to every warning against the danger of receiving that grace in vain, or presuming upon the favour of God, as though it could never be forfeited or with-

drawn. And if, unhappily, there has been in any case a departure from grace and a falling into sin, the same great doctrine of a past admission into the Divine favour is at once a warning against further falling, and a loud call to repentance, encouraging the wandering child of God to arise and go to his Father, and seek once more, before it be too late, those privileges which he had cast aside.

CHAPTER VI.

SANCTIFICATION.

THE doctrine of Sanctification holds a very important place in the theology of the Church. It keeps ever before the minds of men the necessity of practical holiness ; it points out the way in which that holiness may be secured, and thus at once calls into full play the energies of the spiritual life, and prevents the glorious liberty of the children of God degenerating into Antinomian licence. It is to this doctrine, in one or other of its aspects, that the Apostles constantly appeal, when they are warning men against abusing the doctrines of grace, against acting and speaking, as though the freedom of Christianity consisted in the right to live to ourselves, and not in the power to live to God. It is with them the requisite complement of the doctrine of a gratuitous justification, checking as it does the tendency of that doctrine to

produce presumption and carelessness, and at the same time supplying a most effectual test, whereby we may discover for ourselves whether or no we are retaining our hold on that great and essential gift of God; for unless the work of sanctification be really advancing within us, we have no guarantee whatever of our continued interest in the Divine pardon; nay, we have positive proof that we are in danger of forfeiting it altogether, in accordance with our Saviour's declaration, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away¹." Accordingly, when any new school of thought arises within the Church, or when a new sect springs up without it, one of the most important questions we can ask by way of probing its tendencies is, What is its teaching on sanctification? And this is the more essential when the school or sect in question puts very prominently forward the great doctrine of the free justification of believers. For the experience of individuals and the history of the Church unite to teach

¹ St. John xv. 2.

us, that wherever Satan finds himself unable to shake men's faith in the gratuitousness of that mercy which pardons and justifies, it is ever his favourite device to turn that truth into an occasion of falling by making it take up the whole field of view, and so leading men to ignore, or at least to disparage, the absolute necessity of that personal and practical holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Where this tendency is allowed to run its course unchecked, where, e.g. the doctrine of sanctification is allowed to slip entirely out of view, the result is that most dangerous and deluding heresy, which from its complete rejection of the moral law is known as Antinomianism, a heresy which in its full development is the parent of the grossest licentiousness and crime, and thus involves its unhappy votaries in the chains of that very captivity from which Christ had set them free.

And even where this tendency is held in check by the partial recognition of the counterbalancing truth of sanctification on the part

of the teachers of the new school, or by their deep personal piety, the tendency itself is the same, and when it comes to operate on those whose minds are not fortified by the presence of better principles, it leads by a longer road to the same end. Nor can any effectual safeguard be devised to counteract this tendency except that of giving to the doctrine of sanctification that emphatic prominence which, as I hope to shew, it evermore received at the hands of our Blessed Lord and of His Apostles. These remarks seem necessary to introduce our investigation of the treatment this truth receives at the hands of the Brethren. From what we have already seen of their teaching we shall be prepared to find their theory of sanctification defective, but this expectation must not prevent our giving it a dispassionate consideration, and frankly recognising every point in it which reflects the teaching of Holy Scripture.

And first, it is to be noticed, that the general doctrine of the Brethren as to the source and the agent of our sanctification is that of the

Church in all ages. We are sanctified, they tell us, in Christ Jesus and by the Holy Spirit. On this point their testimony is as express and emphatic as we can desire. But when we proceed to enquire into their views as to the nature and working of this gift, their peculiarities begin to shew themselves.

And here the reader must be reminded that the word sanctification as used in the sacred writings has two distinct but closely connected meanings. To sanctify means, in the first place, to consecrate, to set apart or separate a person or thing for the service of God. Thus God is said to have blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. Thus He commanded Moses to sanctify to Him all the first-born; and in the same sense He declared concerning the Temple of Solomon, "I have chosen and sanctified this house that My name may be there for ever." Our Lord, moreover, may be thought to have used the expression in a similar sense when in His great act of Intercession¹ He speaks of "sanctifying Him-

¹ St. John xvii. 19.

self." But when the term "to sanctify" is applied to a sinful fallen being, something more is signified than the mere setting apart and consecrating to God's service. A sinful fallen being as such cannot serve God, and therefore, if the setting apart of such an one is to be anything more than an empty form, it must involve something which counteracts the paralysing effects of sin, and imparts to the sinner a power which by nature he cannot have. Nay, as the evil wrought by sin, original and actual, in the framework of human nature cannot be reversed in a moment, the sanctification of such an one involves a prolonged process by which evil dispositions are cured, evil habits are broken off, and the man more and more renewed in the spirit of his mind after the image of Him that created him. In this latter sense we find the word sanctification frequently employed in the New Testament, e.g. 1 Thess. ch. iv, where it occurs three times in a warning against practical immorality. "This is the will of God," says the Apostle, "even

your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication, that every one of you should know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honour, for God called us not for uncleanness but in sanctification (*ἐν ἁγιασμῷ*);” again, in ch. v. 23 of the same Epistle, the cognate verb occurs in a similar sense, “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly;” while in Hebrews xii. 14 the word reappears in the same sense, “Follow peace with all men, and sanctification, without which no man shall see the Lord.” In all these passages the word is used in the second of the two senses spoken of above, for that gradual purification of heart and life which the Spirit carries on in the living members of Christ’s body, and by which He produces in them more and more the moral likeness of Jesus Christ. I may add, that it is in this sense that the word is for the most part used in the language of theology. Now the Brethren, while admitting the importance of sanctification in the latter sense of the term, and allowing that it is

in this sense that the word is used in the passages just cited, direct attention mainly to the former meaning, which they declare to be that most frequently employed in Scripture. Thus Mr. Darby says¹, "I would point out to you the meaning of the word sanctification ; it is rarely used in the Scripture in the sense in which we generally use it, that is to say, in the progressive sense . . . I do not set aside this sense of the word, but it more particularly means an act of separation, a setting apart for God." And Mr. Kelly says, yet more strongly², "The word sanctification invariably means the setting apart to God those who are concerned. . . . It does not matter where the word is found in Scripture, sanctification, when used of a man, invariably means a setting apart to God ;" though he too admits, on p. 12 of the same pamphlet, that there are passages in which the word is used "exclusively" in the other sense. Now if the Brethren contented themselves with point-

¹ "Sanctification," p. 5.

² "True Sanctification," by W. Kelly, p. 3.

ing out the original meaning of the word, with directing attention to those passages in which that meaning seems the predominant one, and drawing from this use of the term such practical lessons as might suggest themselves, they would be doing good service. But they lay so much stress upon the meaning of the word as generally used in the Old Testament that the fuller meaning generally attached to it in the New Testament is put quite into the background. And, as the act of consecration involved in the earlier meaning is represented as irreversible when it has once taken place, it becomes the main anxiety of one holding their view of the subject to discover whether that act has taken place or not. If it has not, he has neither part nor lot in the matter; if it has, he is set apart for ever, he has all that is necessary for salvation, and is secured against all danger of finally falling away. For instance, Mr. Darby says¹, "When we have received Christ, there is not a single grace which is not for me and in me. There

¹ "Sanctification," p. 15.

is no Christian who has not every grace that is in Jesus. Suppose even a state of failure; it is the strongest case, but this hinders not that we possess all in Him. Failure is a sad thing, but that changes not the position; for the Christian has received not a part of Christ but the whole of Christ." And in precise accordance with this principle he says to those who are in anxiety about their sanctification, "Assure yourself first of all that you are saved."

In the writings of Mr. Mackintosh¹ we find this view of the subject carried out in further detail. In "Things New and Old" he denies emphatically that sanctification is a progressive work in virtue of which our old nature is made better; he declares that both Scripture and the experience of believers are against such a view. On the contrary, he maintains that sanctification "is an immediate, a complete, a divine, an eternal work;" that, like the resurrection of the body, it is done in a moment: "The idea of a member of the family of God, or of the body of Christ, wholly

¹ "Sanctification—What is it?" p. 1.

justified, but only half sanctified, is at once opposed to Scripture and revolting to all the sensibilities of the Divine Nature!" Again¹: "Could any one be in Christ and be only half sanctified? Assuredly not. He will grow in the knowledge and experience of what sanctification really is. He will enter into its practical power, its moral effects upon his habits, thoughts, feelings, affections, and associations; in a word, he will understand and exhibit the mighty influence of Divine sanctification upon his entire course, conduct, and character. But then he was as completely sanctified in God's view the moment he became linked to Christ by faith, as he will be when he comes to bask in the sunshine of the Divine Presence! All was settled the moment he believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God, as settled as ever it will be, because as settled as God can make it."

The above extracts, and they might be multiplied to any extent, make it quite clear, that though the Brethren do not deny that

¹ "Sanctification—What is it?" p. 16.

there is such a thing as progressive sanctification, while in some parts of their writings they even insist upon its importance, they for the most part use the term in a sense which excludes the idea of progress. But the reader must not gather from this that the difference between their teaching and that of the rest of Christendom on this point is simply one of phraseology. For important doctrinal issues are involved in the emphasis they lay on the original meaning of the word.

I. In the first place, this use of the term excludes the moral law as a rule of life from the idea of sanctification. It enables them to teach that we are sanctified by faith only, *without effort* and *without works*. Mr. Mackintosh¹, speaking of "earnest anxious struggling souls," who have not received his view of this subject, says, "They have gotten righteousness and justification without works¹, but they imagine that they must get sanctification with works. They have gotten righteousness by faith, but they imagine that they must get

¹ "Sanctification—What is it?" p. 13.

sanctification by effort. Thus it is they lose their peace. They do not see that we get sanctification in precisely the same way as we get justification, inasmuch as Christ is made to us the one as well as the other. Do we get Christ by effort? No; by faith. It is 'to him that worketh *not*.' This applies to all we get in Christ." Surely this is a terrible perversion of Scripture. When St. Paul says Christ is made to us sanctification, he means Christ is the source of the grace that sanctifies, Christ is "He that sanctifieth¹," but this by no means implies that no efforts on our part are required by way of responding to that grace. Mr. Mackintosh might as well argue that because Christ is made to us wisdom, therefore no effort is required on our part to appropriate and secure that wisdom.

II. This view of the doctrine leaves men without practical test as to their present state in God's sight. The question which it puts into the mouth of a Christian whose conscience is stirred on this matter of sanctifica-

¹ Hebrews ii, 11.

tion is not, Am I being sanctified in the sense of being made holy? or, in Scripture language, Am I growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? but have I been already completely and eternally sanctified; have I, that is, been separated, set apart for salvation finally and for ever? And for an answer to this question the enquirer is directed not to any of the proper fruits of this setting apart in his increasing practical holiness, but simply to his own internal persuasion that Jesus is the Son of God; as though we could possibly know how far our persuasion on this point is of the nature of Christian faith, except by enquiring how far it has influenced our hearts and reformed our lives. Far different from this is the method of Holy Scripture. There we are evermore directed to the fruits of the Spirit, as the only reliable proof of His abiding Presence. There the continued growth within us of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, and other Christian graces is represented as the only sure guarantee of our present freedom from the con-

demnation of the law. While the Apostle, who more than all others has been permitted to unfold to the Church the unfathomable mysteries of Divine Love, has given us no other test of our personal interest therein but the strictly practical one, "Hereby do we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments¹."

III. But thirdly, the view we have been considering removes one of the safeguards of the Christian life, by declaring that the crown is sure before the race has been begun. By making practical sanctification a matter entirely subsidiary to a sanctification which has already set us apart irrevocably for salvation, it renders void and meaningless those constant warnings addressed to Christians in the New Testament against receiving the grace of God in vain², or treating as an unholy thing that blood of the covenant wherewith they once were sanctified. Scripture, indeed, ever recognises the grace and mercy of God as "the sole source of all the good received by us,

¹ 1 St. John ii. 3.

² 2 Cor. vi. 1 ; Hebr. x. 29.

and of all the imperfect good as yet accomplished in us¹." At the same time, it makes privilege the measure of responsibility, and demands obedience not merely as a return for mercies already received, but as the indispensable condition of their continuance. "Be not deceived," says St. Paul, "God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap²." "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness³?" Remember that this last reminder was addressed to men whom the Apostle had just bidden to reckon themselves dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and then say whether such a warning is not made utterly nugatory by the Brethren's theory of sanctification.

It may indeed be said that the Gospel furnishes us with higher motives for obedience than the fear of drawing back to perdition,

¹ Dr. Mill, "Five Sermons on the Temptation," No. 5.

² Gal. vi. 7.

³ Rom. vi. 16.

and that our love to God, and our gratitude for mercies secured to us without our desert, should be such as to enable us to dispense with all other and inferior motives. And indeed there would be force in this, if either our love or our gratitude were all that it ought to be. If, indeed, we loved the Lord our God with all our hearts and all our souls; if His mercies in Christ Jesus made their appeal to hearts in which the power of sin existed no more, then might motives such as these be sufficient to bear us on to a whole-hearted and unreserved fulfilment of His Holy Will. But since our daily experience tells us that neither our love nor our gratitude, even at their best, form any adequate response to the goodness and mercy of God, it is surely not wise to throw upon principles which sway us so imperfectly the *whole* work of supplying the motive power of our spiritual life. And when we find that He who knows our needs has appealed to our fears as well as to our affections, has interspersed His strongest declarations as to the freeness and fulness of His

own mercy with the most emphatic warnings as to the possibility of falling short of it, and the terrible consequences of doing so, we see at once that the provision made in Scripture for our needs in this respect is in exact agreement with what our own experience has shown to be so necessary. There are stages in the inner life of even the greatest saints, in which they need the stimulus of fear to keep them in the way of righteousness, or to bring them back into it when at the call of some besetting temptation they have for a season wandered ; and it may well be, that among those who shall reach by God's mercy the prize of their high calling, there will be not a few who will have to thank Him in all eternity for His merciful and timely warnings, warnings which would never have been given had not the impending danger to which they pointed been a terrible reality.

Or if it be argued, as it sometimes is, that we are doing more honour to God when we suppose that He will not allow any sin of ours, however great or heinous, to separate us finally

from Him ; the reply is easy, that we must gather our ideas of what is most for God's honour not from our own preconceptions, but from what He has distinctly revealed concerning Himself. And as He has declared that there shall in no wise enter into His Presence anything that defileth, that He will Himself deprive of their portion in the book of life those who mutilate His revelation to mankind, it is neither wise nor humble on our part to invent or to embrace any theory of salvation, which sets these sacred warnings summarily aside, or to apply the promise of everlasting salvation in such a way as to make them void. The declarations of our Blessed Lord as to the eternal safety of those who are truly His apply in the first instance not to persons, but to characters, even to such as hear His voice and follow Him, and it is only in proportion as we sustain this character that we have any claim to them as our own. Accordingly the great Apostle of the Gentiles, notwithstanding all the signs of Divine favour bestowed upon him, kept under his body and brought it into

subjection, lest after all he should fail in attaining the heavenly prize, and exhorted the most enlightened among his converts to work out their salvation with fear and trembling; while St. Peter exhorted those who were being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation to pass the time of their sojourning here in fear, and to beware lest being led away by the example of the wicked they should fall from their own steadfastness.

IV. But there is another point in the teaching of the Brethren on this subject, which demands the more attention because it neutralises in great measure what admissions they make as to sanctification being in some sense a progressive work. It is their constant assertion that sanctification does not consist at all in the amelioration of our nature. That nature they declare is an utterly ruined thing, and an utterly ruined thing can never be sanctified. Mr. Darby, after dwelling on the words "all flesh is grass, the grass withereth," adds¹, "God never

¹ "Sanctification," p. 11.

sanctifies what withers like grass;" and again, in his notes on the First Epistle of St. John, he says, "There is no cleansing of the old nature, no mending of the old Adam. We have got the new nature, which cannot sin." Another writer says, "God does not change or remove or ameliorate the old nature in any degree in imparting a new;" while Mr. Mackintosh, in the pamphlet cited above, states the matter yet more fully, "The word of God never once teaches us, that the Holy Ghost has for His object the improvement, either gradual or otherwise, of our fallen nature, that nature which we inherit by natural birth from fallen Adam;" and he quotes St. Paul's words, "the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God," as a clear and conclusive proof, that the natural man cannot be sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Of course it will follow from all this, that the only progress possible in sanctification will consist in an increasing realisation of the fact that we are already sanctified, and accordingly Christians are exhorted by the Brethren, as

the very condition of enjoying peace, not to look for any improvement in their nature.

But a little examination will show us, that a mistaken use of the terms "flesh," "old man," "old nature," and their opposites, underlies the above reasoning. A careful reader of St. Paul's Epistles will have observed, that when he uses the expression "the old man" and "the new man," he is referring, not to two distinct natures properly so-called, but to two distinct conditions of one and the same human nature. By the "old man" the Apostle means human nature in its fallen state, subject to all the manifold spiritual evils which transgression has brought into the world, in bondage to sinful habit, unable "to turn and prepare itself by its own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God¹," and destitute of that light and truth which alone can restore it. By "the new man," on the other hand, the Apostle means the same human nature rescued from its former state of ruin, pardoned and accepted

¹ Art. X.

in Christ, endowed in Him with spiritual life and power, and so coming forth from the doors of its prison-house and leading its captivity captive. When the same Apostle tells the Colossians¹, that they have put off the old man and his deeds, and have put on the new man, he means that they have exchanged their old estate of sin and ruin in Adam for their new estate of pardon, life, and privilege in Christ; and when he exhorts the Ephesians² to put off the old man and to put on the new man in their practice, he is simply, as the context clearly shows³, bidding them abandon the practices which were the natural fruit of their former state, and to cultivate and exhibit the graces of the position they now enjoyed and the spiritual life they had received. It is the same with the corresponding expression "the flesh and the spirit." They

¹ Coloss. iii. 9, 10.

² Eph. iv. 23, 24.

³ Eph. iv. 25, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour;" 28, "Let him that stole steal no more;" 29, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth;" 31, "Let all bitterness and wrath, etc. be put away from you."

represent, not two natures strictly so called, but two distinct conditions of our common human nature; those who are still living under all the disabilities entailed by the fall are said to be "in the flesh," those who have been made members of Christ and endowed with the Spirit of grace are said to be "in the Spirit." So too, when we speak of the old nature and the new nature, we are using the word nature in its metaphorical and not in its realistic sense, to designate the different characters and powers belonging to our common humanity, according as it is destitute of or endowed with the life-imparting grace of the Most High.

These considerations will enable us to estimate aright the statements of the Brethren quoted above. If by the expressions "the flesh," "the old nature," "our fallen humanity," they simply mean unsanctified humanity, then to say that the flesh, our old nature, cannot be sanctified, is only equivalent to saying that unsanctified humanity cannot as such be sanctified. But we need not credit

the Brethren with such a pointless and barren truism.

If, on the other hand, they mean, as in the passages cited above they certainly seem to mean, that our human nature is so fallen that it cannot be improved or restored, since God will not sanctify a ruin, then they are giving an emphatic contradiction to some of the most direct statements of the New Testament, they are placing an unheard-of limitation on the power of the Holy Ghost, and robbing of one of its chiefest glories the Redeeming work of our blessed Lord. But, besides this, the practical tendency of such teaching is of a most dangerous kind. For it leads men to be careless and unconcerned about those workings of evil which have place even in the regenerate. It leads them to ascribe such workings to their possession of a nature which cannot be sanctified, and to comfort themselves with the reflection, that since they also possess another nature, which is sinless, all must come right at last. Scripture, indeed, evermore recognises clearly the pre-

sence of the flesh in the regenerate man, the existence, that is, of desires and affections which have not yet yielded themselves to the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God. Our new birth in Christ does not extirpate at once the inherited bias of our nature, nor does the grace which restores a fallen Christian reverse in a moment of time the evil dispositions resulting from past transgression; it is only by degrees that the true circumcision of the Spirit has its perfect work within us, "and our hearts and all our members are mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts¹." But while the existence of evil in the regenerate is thus fully recognised, that evil is never treated as an unconquerable foe, nor are Christians taught to consider their peace concerned in not expecting any improvement in their nature; on the contrary, the grace imparted to them is always represented as abundantly sufficient to subdue all evil tendencies, and to bring every thought, desire, and affection into captivity to the

¹ Collect for the Feast of the Circumcision.

obedience of Christ. With such vast powers at their command, Christians are exhorted to make full proof of them in the constant suppression of everything in their hearts or lives which displeases God¹. The presence and working of evil within them need never take them by surprise, but should always fill them with grave anxiety and alarm, and stir them up to crush it before it acquires strength. This, at all events, is the object that a Christian has before him in his daily struggle with sin. It is his heart's desire and his prayer to God, that his whole nature with all its powers and affections may be purified more and more, may become in an increasing degree an acceptable sacrifice to the Most High. That the Brethren fully share in this desire we do not for a moment doubt, indeed their writings bear ample witness that they do. But when they tell us not to expect any improvement in our nature, when they assert that our fallen nature can never be sanctified, they are, unintentionally, no doubt, teaching

¹ Gal. v. 16.

men to acquiesce in the existence of evils which it should be their lifelong endeavour to remove. The struggle will at the best have many drawbacks and disappointments, but nevertheless it must be sustained, and we cannot deprecate too strongly teaching like that we have just been noticing, which tends to weaken the hands of those who are engaged in it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S RULE OF LIFE.

THERE is, perhaps, no part of the teaching of the Brethren which needs more careful and dispassionate investigation than that which deals with the moral law. Many of their statements on this subject recall the wildest vagaries of Antinomian heresy, while at the same time their earnest protests against such a construction being put upon their words, and the evident desire of many of their writers to enforce a high standard of practical holiness, forbid us to follow out some of their statements to what seems to be their logical conclusion. Moreover, their teaching on this subject has had so much to do with determining their views and shaping their statements on other subjects more or less connected with it, that it would be im-

possible to gain a full view of the latter unless we carefully examine the former.

It is, then, their constant assertion that the law is not the rule of a Christian's life,—and by the law they explain themselves to mean, not the whole Mosaic system, but the moral as distinguished from the ceremonial portion of it. The statement is reiterated with an emphasis and earnestness which testifies to the importance which they attach to it. To call it in question is to shew but little appreciation of the full range of Gospel liberty; to deny it is to part with one of the choicest privileges of the Christian calling. It is necessary therefore to consider the grounds on which this strange teaching is supposed by them to rest.

I. First, then, they direct our attention to those passages in St. Paul's Epistles in which he declares that the Christian is "not under law," is "free from it," is "dead" to it. They bid us mark the absence of all qualification from these statements, and recognise in that an unanswerable proof of their favourite

theory. "Scripture," says Mr. Darby, "does not say you are not under law in one way, but you are in another; you are not for justification, but you are for a rule of life. It declares you are not under law but under grace." Before, however, we accept the conclusion to which this argument is meant to lead us, it will be well to examine the passages appealed to, and to discover the sense in which the Apostle uses the expressions in question; and it will be found that in none of these cases is he treating of the Christian's rule of conduct, but either of the ground of his justification, or of the source of that spiritual life whereby he lives to God. In short, the Apostle's statements on this subject appear to fall under the three following heads.

1. The Law cannot by its very nature justify one who has transgressed its precepts; its office towards a sinner, as such, is only to condemn him.

2. The Law cannot impart to a fallen vitiated nature the powers of a new spiritual

life, and enable a man to burst the bonds of evil nature and evil habit.

3. So far is the Law from possessing any such quickening power, that it tends, by its very opposition to our depraved inclination, to stir up the very evils which it condemns.

In all these cases the Apostle is speaking, not of a Christian's rule of life, but of the relations of law to man unrenewed. This will be still more evident if we examine in detail some of those passages on which the Brethren rely as the support of their theory. One of the passages most frequently appealed to by them is that contained in Galatians iii. 10: "As many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." It is evident from this, the Brethren say, that the law cannot be the rule of a Christian's life, for it would bring him under a curse. "A Christian," says Mr. Darby, "has sin in him, and fails; and if the law applies to him he is under the curse, for

it brings a curse on every one who sins." And again, "The law has power to rule and curse a man as long as he lives. It makes no difference between regenerate and unregenerate; it curses all who attempt to stand before it." But it is clear from the context of the above passage that the Apostle is speaking of those who looked to the law for justification. In verse 8 he speaks of God *justifying* the Gentiles through faith. In verse 11 he proceeds to shew that no one is *justified* by the law in the sight of God. When, then, he says in verse 10, "As many as are of the works of the law are under a curse," he evidently means as many as depend on their works for justification are under a curse, because they have not fulfilled the condition on which alone the law can justify, viz. that of entire obedience. This passage, then, must be referred to the first of the above heads, and has nothing to do with a Christian's rule of conduct.

Another statement in the same Epistle is alleged in proof of their theory: "If ye be led

by the Spirit, ye are not under the law¹." This the Brethren take to mean, If ye are led by the Spirit, ye are free from the law as a rule of life. Here, again, however, the context makes it quite clear that the Apostle is speaking of legal condemnation. He is stirring up the Galatians to walk in the Spirit as the true way of overcoming the lusts of the flesh. "Walk in the Spirit," he says, "and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: that ye may not (*ὅνα μὴ ποιῆτε*) do the things that ye would²." And then he adds, "But if ye are being led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law," i.e. ye are not under that legal condemnation in which fulfilling the lusts of the flesh would surely involve you. That this is the meaning of the expression "ye are not under the law," is clear from the parallel expression in ver. 23, where, after enumerating the fruits of the Spirit, i.e. the results of walking

¹ Gal. v. 18.

² Gal. v. 16, 17.

in the Spirit, he says, "*against such* there is no law." But that the Apostle does not mean to abolish the law as a rule of life is evident from the intermediate verses. For in verses 19-21 he gives a catalogue of the works of the flesh; and he declares concerning such works, that they who do them shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Now when we examine these works of the flesh, we find that they are one and all breaches in one form or another of the moral law, either of the first or second table. So what the Apostle really says is this, that they who commit these breaches of the moral law shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Surely it must be quite clear from this that the Apostle did regard the moral law as the rule of a Christian's life. But further, he next proceeds to give us a catalogue of the fruits of the Spirit,—love, joy, peace, &c.; and we find on examining them, that they consist simply of those dispositions of mind which issue by natural and necessary consequence in the fulfilling of the law. Whether, therefore, we

look at his description of the works of the flesh, or at his description of the fruits of the Spirit, we see that each is based on the assumption that the moral law *is* the rule of a Christian's life. In an earlier chapter of the same Epistle the Apostle says, "I through the law died to the law that I might live unto God¹." It is curious that this should be alleged by the Brethren in support of their theory, for scarcely any passage of the Apostle's writings could be quoted which more convincingly disproves it. For what is living unto God but living agreeably to those relations which God has established (1) between us and Himself, (2) between us and our neighbours? What is it but loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbours as ourselves; and what is this but taking the moral law as a rule of life? But the Apostle tells us he died to the law in order to do this. What does he mean? Of course he cannot mean that he died to the law as a rule of life in order that he might

¹ Gal. ii. 19.

fulfil it as a rule of life, for this would be to contradict himself. But in the foregoing context he has been denying that men can be justified by the law. To die to the law in this passage, then, is to refuse to look to it as the ground of justification; so when the Apostle says, "I died to the law that I might live to God," it is as if he said, I died to the law as the ground of justification, in order that Christ living in me I might fulfil it as a rule of life. But further, the Apostle says, I "through the law" died to the law, i.e. the law was itself the instrument of my death: it revealed sin, it condemned sin, it stirred up sin, it provided me neither with pardon for the past, nor with grace for the present. It compels me, therefore, by its very nature to die to it, to look elsewhere both for pardon and for grace as the very condition of fulfilling it by living to God.

There is another passage in the same Epistle, which seems at first sight to bear out their view, and certainly does not admit of the same explanation as those just cited: "Before

faith came," says the Apostle, "we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which was afterwards to be revealed. So the law has been our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith, but after that faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster¹." Here certainly the Apostle seems to be asserting without qualification the entire abolition of the law. But it is plain from the context that throughout this portion of his argument he is not speaking of the moral law properly so called, or merely of the moral portion of the Mosaic code, but of the Mosaic system as a whole. For instance, he speaks of it in an earlier verse of this chapter as having been introduced 430 years after God gave His promise to Abraham, as having been ordained by Angels in the hand of a mediator. He describes it in ch. iv, under the expression "the elements of the world," as "weak and beggarly elements;" he speaks of it as involving the observance "of days and months and years."

¹ Gal. iii. 23.

It is clear, then, that he is speaking of the whole Mosaic system, including the ceremonial as well as the moral portion of it, and what he tells us is, that the office of this great system, as a system, was tutorial and preparatory. It could not justify, it could not give life, but it pointed to, it prepared the way for, One who could do both, and so when He appeared, this its office came to an end. While "shut up" under that system, man was like a youthful heir under the guardians of his nonage, but just as the heir on attaining his majority passed from under the hands of his guardians, so those who were baptized into Christ were emancipated from the preparatory system, under which they had been previously "kept," to enter upon the privileges and responsibilities of the sons of God. In a word, the Apostle is not denying here that the Mosaic system contained elements which were incapable of abolition: indeed, he elsewhere, as we shall see further on, expressly asserts that it did; he is only saying that the system, as a system, was introduced for a

temporary purpose, and therefore of course passed away when that purpose had been accomplished.

The Epistle to the Galatians then, though so frequently appealed to by the Brethren, does not, even in the passages which they allege, support their cause; but there are certain passages in the Epistle to the Romans which are frequently cited by them as witnesses to their teaching, and therefore demand our examination.

The statements most frequently appealed to in this Epistle are contained in the sixth and seventh chapters. In the first of these chapters we have the statement, "sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law but under grace." Here the Brethren tell us there is no question of justification, but of victory over sin, and the Apostle considers that that victory is secured by the abolition of the law as a rule of life. The Apostle, however, is really warning the Romans against an abuse to which the doctrine of grace is liable in the hands of

“curious and carnal men.” They would say, as indeed they have said again and again, If the grace of God is so abundant, so overflowing, let us continue in sin, that it may abound. He points out the inconsistency of such a deduction with that death unto sin of which men are made partakers when they are buried with Christ in baptism; he enlarges on the character and purpose of that great privilege, showing that it was bestowed for no other reason than that we should henceforth walk in newness of life. We may remark in passing that “walking in newness of life” is in this passage opposed to “continuing in sin,” and as sin is, according to St. John’s definition, *ἀνομία*, disregard of law, so walking in newness of life must involve the keeping of the law. Having expounded the nature and purpose of baptismal privilege, he goes on to stir up those whom he addresses to think and act as men who really possess it: “Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your

mortal body, neither yield ye your members servants to uncleanness and to lawlessness unto lawlessness, but yield yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." What is this warning against "lawlessness"? what is this exhortation to make our members instruments of righteousness? what is this warning against allowing sin to reign within us? what are these but so many proofs that the Apostle did regard the moral law as the rule of a Christian's life? Once more, by way of encouraging them to this course of holiness and conformity to law, he adds, "for sin shall not lord it over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace." In order to see the meaning of this last sentence, we have only to call to mind what has been said above as to the effects of law on those who are not under grace; the law, it has been shown, can of itself only reveal sin, condemn sin, stir up sin, it cannot secure conformity with its own demands, and therefore the Apostle's reasoning amounts to this: If you

were under law; if law, that is, represented the whole of your relations with God, sin could not but have dominion over you. For you have sinned, and the law provides no pardon; you are weak through sinning, and the law provides no strength; but being under grace, you have both pardon for the past and strength for the future; therefore stir up the gift that is in you, and sin shall not have dominion over you.

In ch. vii we have the following passage: "Now we are delivered from the law, having died to that wherein we were held." Here there certainly seems at first sight to be an entire setting aside of the law in every sense. We are said to have been discharged from the law (Revised Version), to have died to that in which we were once held fast. But a glance at the context will show us that the expression "we have been discharged from the law" in ver. 6, is opposed to the expression "when we were in the flesh" in ver. 5. In a word, the Apostle is contrasting the state of grace, into which we Christians have been

called, with the natural state in which we all alike were born. When we were in the flesh his reasoning implies we were under the law, for there was nothing to stand between us and that righteous sentence which that holy law pronounces, and cannot but pronounce, on every sinner; and not only so, but that law by its very opposition to our natural inclinations stirred up our evil passions, which being thus excited wrought within our members to bring forth fruit unto death, thus increasing our condemnation. But now, being united to Christ, we have been discharged from this state of bondage. We are no longer necessarily liable to have our evil inclinations roused as we listen to its just demands, and so we are free, to do what? to serve ourselves? to set aside the law of God as a rule of life? no, but "to bring forth fruit to God," "to serve Him in the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." Is it not clear from this passage that the very purpose of our redemption is the production of a more spiritual obedience, a more thorough

yielding of ourselves in body, soul, and spirit to Him who has promised, "I will put My laws in their inward parts, and write them upon their hearts"?

We have thus examined most of the passages on which the Brethren rely in support of their strange theory, that the moral law is not the rule of a Christian's life, and we have seen that in no case do they countenance such an idea, while in some the context makes it evident that the Apostle is throughout assuming the very contrary. If we were to examine other passages we should only arrive at similar conclusions with respect to them, but we must now turn to another argument.

II. The Mosaic code, the Brethren tell us, is the only law God ever gave to man, except the prohibition to eat the forbidden fruit; from this of course the inference is easy that the moral law, being part and parcel of the Mosaic system, was to pass away with it. Adam before the fall, they say, was not under law, except in the single particular mentioned

above; his goodness was of a negative rather than of a positive kind; he was simply innocent, not righteous or holy, since the latter characteristic would have implied a law. The first generation of mankind, from Adam to Moses, were not, according to the Brethren, under law; they had acquired indeed by the Fall, what Adam had not before the Fall, a knowledge of good and evil, and thus were in some sense a law to themselves; but they were not under any God-given law; consequently, though they could sin, they could not transgress, since transgression implies the existence of such a law, whereas sin, according to the Brethren, does not.

Now in reply to all this it may be observed, first, that the writer of the book of Genesis does not pretend to give us in detail the covenant existing between God and our first parents before the Fall. He dwells only on the particular in which that covenant was broken; nor was there need for more than this, for in offending on that one point they set aside the relations previously subsisting

between God and them. But that they were under other obligations beside that specified in the narrative is evident from the nature of the case. Their relations with their great Creator and preserver involved that faith, fear, love, worship, gratitude and confidence which are due to Him from all His intelligent creatures; their relations with one another implied at least that mutual love, which was at once the well-spring and the guarantee of mutual duty; and thus, within the very gates of Eden we see in full operation the moral law of God. Whether, indeed, that law was made known to our first parents by specific revelation, or whether their unstained consciences recognised as though by instinct the relations in which they stood to God and to each other, and their unbiassed wills gladly chose the good and right way, in either case those relations were the ordinance of God, and the law which was implied in their existence was the law of God. And further, as regards the theory of the Brethren that man was created in innocence, not in righteousness and true

holiness, what can be more contrary to the Scripture statements that God created man in His own image, God made man upright? If man before the Fall fulfilled those moral obligations of which we have spoken above, he was most certainly a holy being; if he did not fulfil them he was most certainly not an innocent one. The truth is, the Brethren's idea of man's original state has no foundation either in Scripture or in reason, it is in direct contradiction to the teaching of the Ancient Church, it is simply an expedient to which they have had recourse for the sake of eliminating the idea of law from their conception of the unfallen state of man. Nor when we turn to the state of man after the Fall do we find their teaching any more satisfactory, for man was still under all those obligations which the moral law imposes. He had forfeited, indeed, his power of meeting those obligations in their fulness, but the obligations remained, for a debt does not cease to exist because we have not the means of liquidating it; accordingly, we find most dis-

tinct evidence in patriarchal history that the moral law was binding, and that the conscience of man recognised its obligation. What is the terror-stricken cry of the first murderer, "From Thy face shall I be hid,—and it shall come to pass that every one that findeth me shall slay me," but the recognition of a broken law and of a righteous retribution? Why did the Deluge sweep away the descendants of Seth and Cain alike, but because the earth was full of violence, and all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth? Why were the Cities of the Plain set forth for an example of eternal fire, but because another portion of God's holy law had been despised and cast aside? And when we turn to those who had attained by penitence and faith to a foretaste of Gospel graces and blessings, what a testimony have we to the existence and obligation of the moral law in the Divine declaration concerning Noah, "Noah was an upright man and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God:" "Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation:" or again, in the

declaration concerning Abraham, "I know Abraham, that he will command his children and household after him to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment:" and once more, what else but a recognition of a law universally binding do we hear in the exclamation of another patriarch in a moment of fierce temptation, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

But, indeed, the teaching of the Brethren on this subject arises from a most inadequate conception of the nature of the moral law. It is not a mere code of precepts capable of being repealed by the same authority which imposed it. It arises by necessary consequence out of those relations which God has established, first between man and Himself, secondly between man and man. It has, then, existed from the beginning, it must exist until the end. To say that there ever was a time, since man's creation, when there was no moral law, is to say that there was a time when man had no relations either with God or with his fellows. To say that a

Christian is set free from the law as a rule of life, is to say either that a Christian has no relations to God or man, or that he is at liberty to ignore them. Mr. Darby in his tract upon "Law," indeed, endeavours to avoid the rock of Antinomianism on which his theories are driving him, by making a distinction between the moral portion of the law as spoken of by St. Paul, and moral law in general. The former, he tells us, has been abolished, the latter remains; from the former we have been delivered, but "to say that a Christian is delivered from the latter is nonsense or utterly monstrous wickedness."

But in the first place, the distinction is nugatory. The moral precepts of the Mosaic code are but the embodiment of that morality whose obligation Mr. Darby proceeds to assert. We have seen already that these precepts were binding from the beginning, and that the breach of them had been visited with Divine judgments of the severest kind. Moreover, all that the Apostle says as to the inability of the law to convey pardon and

grace, of its terrible effect in stirring up the evils it condemns, applies quite as much to what Mr. Darby calls "morality" as to the moral code of Moses itself. Indeed, so nugatory is the distinction which Mr. Darby has attempted to draw, that further on in the same pamphlet he obliterates it himself. For he says, on p. 4, "It is the moral law which is ruinous in its effect to every fallen child of Adam," and on p. 5, after quoting the Apostle's words, "ye are not under law," "the strength of sin is the law," "I was alive without the law once," he proceeds to explain them by saying, "he is speaking of the law in its moral nature and essence;" and again, on p. 14, "Law is the measure of man's responsibility as such to God." Surely we may ask in this case, how can it possibly cease to be a rule of life? Mr. Darby's desire to escape Antinomian conclusions is undoubtedly a genuine one; but it is best secured by not adopting Antinomian premisses. His declarations as to the obligation a Christian is under to obey the precepts of the New Testa-

ment, and to gain all the light he can from those of the Old Testament, are in themselves most satisfactory, but they are made in the teeth of the position he has set himself to defend, "that the moral law is not the rule of a Christian's life."

His disciples, however, in some cases at least, do not seem to shrink from following their master's principle to its natural conclusion. In a little pamphlet on the Confirmation vows, Mr. Mackintosh accuses the Israelites of "proud legality" for making the solemn declaration "All that the Lord saith unto us we will do." He sets aside the sentence of Divine approval, "They have well said *all* that they have spoken" by the suggestion that that approval referred only to *a part* of what they had said, viz. to their confession of their inability to endure the Divine Presence. And in accordance with this, he proceeds to attack the Church for requiring of candidates for Confirmation a promise that they will keep God's commandments. Such a promise he likens to "the promissory note of a bankrupt,"

and declares that it involves "an insult to the righteousness of God," and "a plain and palpable apostasy from the religion of faith." Nor is he satisfied with the defence that we make this promise in full dependence upon the covenanted grace of God. "There can be no such thing as grace," he tells us, "when people are putting themselves under law." "To ask for grace under such circumstances is to ask for grace to subvert entirely the whole gospel of Jesus Christ."

III. But there is one more argument put forward by the Brethren on which a few words must be said in conclusion. Christ, they tell us, is our rule of life, and by assigning this position to the law we virtually put it in Christ's place. St. Paul, as Mr. Darby reminds us, puts Christ and the law in contrast. And accordingly, he concludes that, on St. Paul's own showing, we cannot be under obligation to Christ and to the law. But, as has been pointed out on an earlier page, Christ is opposed by the Apostle to the law as the ground of justification and as the

source of life. He has done that which the law could not do; for He has purchased pardon and acceptance for us, and He is also Himself the source of that new life whereby we live to God. And therefore to look to the law for that which the law cannot do, but which Christ has done, is of course to abandon the Christian ground altogether. It is, in the language of the Apostle, "to fall from grace." But when the Brethren infer from this that Christ and the law are opposed to each other as rules of life, they are not only introducing into their conclusion an element not contained in their premisses, but they are ignoring the relations subsisting between the law and the life of our Blessed Lord. That life exhibits to us the perfect working of that law; in it we behold the solitary instance of an entire response on the part of man to all those claims of God and man of which the moral law is the expression. Therefore, in the life of Christ we see the moral law not abolished, but established for ever as the rule of life for man.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RELATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN TO THE WORLD.

LIKE many of those who in ancient times separated from the Church, the stricter Brethren separate as far as possible from the world also. They denounce secular life generally as though it were a service of Satan, and only allow those whom they can influence to practise medicine and a few handicraft trades. Politics, commerce, military and naval service, and general social intercourse they set wholly on one side, as forming part of a system on which there rests the malediction of the Most High, as involving intercourse with the unconverted, and so being inconsistent with that entire "separateness" which they regard as the chief characteristic of a Christian. Nay, to such an extent do some of them carry this principle of separa-

tion from the world that they refuse to associate themselves with others even for religious purposes, unless they are assured that those with whom they join are in their view "converted men," and as they can never have this assurance in the case of mixed societies, they decline to join such societies. "I may be asked," says Mr. Mackintosh¹, "if I would not help a man by the roadside to get his cart out of the ditch? I reply, certainly; but if I were asked to become a member of a mixed society for the purpose of getting carts out of ditches, I should refuse, not because of my superior sanctity, but because God's word says, Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. This would be my answer, no matter what were the object proposed by a mixed society."

That there is a sense in which Christians are bound to separate from the world no one who knows anything of Christianity will deny; such separateness in some sense is involved in the very idea of a Christian; that

¹ "The Unequal Yoke," p. 33.

in all necessary intercourse with the world, a straight and even course must be kept, and nothing undertaken which prejudices our position as members of God's household, or impairs in the least degree our loyalty to Him, will be admitted without proof by all who call themselves Christians; nor can it be questioned that the greatest care and circumspection, the greatest watchfulness and prayer, are necessary for those who would engage in secular pursuits without injury to their spiritual life. But when theories on this subject are put forward which would exclude Christian men from secular offices, and so leave these offices entirely in the hands of unbelievers; when Christian men are discouraged from joining religious associations, lest perchance they should contract contamination in doing so, we are entitled to enquire into the reasoning which leads to such strange conclusions.

And I think it will appear from examination that their teaching on this subject rests mainly on a misconception as to the exact

meaning of the expression "the world," a misconception remarkably parallel to that which has been noticed in a previous chapter with respect to the expression "the flesh." It was there pointed out, that by the flesh is meant not human nature in itself, but human nature apart from God—human nature with all those perverted powers and evil tendencies which always characterise it, while it is destitute of that knowledge which is life eternal. And so too "the world," in its Scriptural sense, may be taken to signify not human society in itself, but human society considered as estranged from God. In that state of estrangement the thoughts, desires, and affections of men are confined to earthly things. The gratifications of sense, the attractions of worldly wealth and grandeur, or the aspirations of an intellect, which, conscious of no power above it, becomes too readily a god to itself,—or as the Apostle has called them, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,—these are the principles which sway human society in its state of

estrangement from God; these become the objects for which men live, the highest ends to which their efforts are directed. Under the sway of such principles there is no form of evil which will not flourish and abound; whatever tends to rouse and gratify the bodily appetites, whatever can minister to the acquisition of wealth or the attainment of power, whatever can feed that intellectual pride which, when Divine truth is offered, forms the greatest hindrance to its reception, all these are eagerly sought after, unscrupulously used. It is this state of moral and spiritual chaos which is designated by our Saviour and His Apostles "the world." The evil tendencies indeed involved in this absence of the knowledge of God do not always have their full effect, but they are always present, and only wait favourable opportunities to disclose their real nature. The necessity of preserving order in some degree, the feeling of mutual interest, or the presence and working of better principles, may counteract them for a time, but when the power that lets is taken

for a season out of the way, they attain their full development, and manifest to all who have eyes to see the terrible evils which are the fruit and the curse of human society apart from God. It is then from the world in this sense, the world so far as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life are its ruling principles, that the Christian desires to flee. It is not human society in itself, but human society estranged from God, and the principles which reign therein as the result of that estrangement, that we are called upon to renounce. And just as the man who renounces the flesh does not renounce human nature with all its powers of mind and body, but only those principles which reign in it in its unrecovered state, so the man who renounces the world does not renounce human society in itself with all its various offices and duties, he simply declines to be guided by those principles which sway human society when once it has cut itself off from the true source of strength and of union.

But further, it may be shown that however

much Scripture dwells on the evils entailed by the Fall, it never loses sight of the fact that human society, like human nature itself, is in its origin divine; and just as the Fall did not change the essence of our humanity, but only introduced disorder and confusion into its constitution, so neither did it alter the essential framework of human society. The family, the tribe, the nation, the kingdom, were all the natural development of a system whose foundations were laid before the Fall, and we find frequent instances in the Old Testament Scriptures in which God distinctly sanctions that wonderful organisation which was in its first beginnings the work of His own hands. In the cases of Noah, of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, we see His recognition of the family; in His covenanted relations with their descendants, we see His recognition of the tribe, the nation, the kingdom. And as the Jewish kingdom was running its course, and after it had come to an end, we see distinct indications in the prophetic writings of a Divine recognition of

this same system among the heathen. Nay, we find the chosen people in the time of their captivity bidden to pray to the Lord, for the peace and prosperity of a heathen power, and even accepting high and responsible office under a heathen monarch. But as it is on the New Testament chiefly that the Brethren found their theory of entire separation from the world, we must ask how this question is there handled. Does the New Testament recognise human society as a Divine Institution? or does it condemn it as a lost and ruined thing, with which the saints are to have nothing to do? And first we may notice our Blessed Saviour's recognition of human authority. To say nothing of His submission to the regulations of His own nation, in what way does He deal with that power which during His life on earth was the chief representative of the world—the Power of Rome? The question was once put to Him in person by some who would have entangled Him in His talk, and He replied by bidding his questioners “render to Caesar the


things of Caesar." And what He thus required of others He was prepared to do Himself; He allowed Himself to be brought before the judgment-seat of Pilate, and thus recognised in His own sacred Person the authority which Pilate represented. Would He have yielded this submission Himself? would He have required the like submission at the hands of others, had He regarded the authorities of the world as simply representatives of the god of this world? And when from the Lord we turn to His Apostles, we find the same recognition of human society and human authority as Divine ordinances. While resisting such authority to the death when it exalted itself against the knowledge of God, or arrayed itself against the claims of Jesus Christ, they ever yield it a dutiful submission in the things of this life, and even use the advantages which it offers. St. Paul on more than one occasion availed himself of his privileges as a Roman citizen to escape the fury of his persecutors; privileges which, on the principles of the Brethren, he ought to have

trampled under his feet. On another occasion he deliberately placed himself under the protection of Claudius Lysias, and at last claimed the privilege of pleading his cause before Caesar, as the highest court of appeal in all earthly things.

And when from the actions we turn to the *teaching* of the Apostles, we find the same principles recognised. What can be more emphatic than the statement of St. Paul in Rom. xiii, a statement which acquires all the more force when we remember that it is addressed to persons who were living at the centre of earthly government, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God, and the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." In a subsequent verse he twice speaks of the temporal rulers as ministers of God, as persons who were to be obeyed not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake; and further on he uses a still stronger word, *λειτουργοί*, to express the closeness of their

relations with God as His accredited representatives. St. Peter, in very similar language, recognises the validity of human authority, and claims obedience to it "for the Lord's sake," while he and St. Jude alike mention "speaking evil of dignities" as one of the characteristic marks of the mockers of the last time.


But it may be said all this only goes to show, what the Brethren have never denied, that it is the duty of Christians to obey their temporal rulers. It proves, we submit, a great deal more; it proves that God Himself recognises human authority and human governments as His agents in the administration of the world. It thus invests high offices in the state with a sacred character by regarding them as the ordinances of Him who rules in the kingdoms of men. Why then should it be inconsistent in a Christian man to hold an office, which God has so distinctly authorised as a part of the providential system which He has established, for the order and welfare of His creatures? If He recognised such offices when filled by heathen representatives, will He be



less ready to recognise them when filled by those whom "He has called to the knowledge of His grace and faith in Him?" It is no argument against this view to say, that the Christians of the Apostolic age are not represented as holding high offices in the state. They could not do so from the nature of the case, as the first converts were derived almost exclusively from the lower orders; but in the second generation we find saints in Caesar's household, and Erastus, one of St. Paul's followers, is spoken of as holding a high office in the government of Corinth. These two instances are by themselves sufficient to establish the principle that Christianity does not exclude its professors from holding secular appointments.

Hitherto we have spoken only of high offices in the State, but the same principle holds good of all lawful occupations by which the needs of society are supplied, by which we are made to serve one another while we provide for ourselves. These various occupations, whether in higher or in humbler station,

are a part of God's providential system, and the duties they involve may one and all be performed as unto the Lord. Without commerce indeed of some kind, men's wants can never be supplied at all; it is therefore an essential part of God's system, and accordingly it is recognised distinctly by God in His dealings with His ancient people. The censure pronounced by the Prophets on the great commercial powers of the ancient world are directed not against their commerce itself, but against the spirit in which it was pursued, and against the covetousness, luxury, and wrong-doing which had become connected with it; and later experience has shown how necessary such censure may be. But these evils form no essential part of commerce, while the existence of them only calls the more for the assistance of those who are bound by the most solemn obligation to be "true and just in all their dealings." Moreover, the sanction given in the New Testament to many of the occupations of mankind extends by parity of reasoning to others which are not mentioned.



Our Lord Himself by following the occupation of a carpenter has given a general sanction to one class of worldly employments. And if the Apostles Peter and Andrew and the sons of Zebedee forsook their occupation at the bidding of Jesus Christ, this was not because the occupation was itself unlawful, but because He had other work for them to do. Had our Lord regarded it as unlawful in itself He would never have encouraged it by the two miraculous draughts of fish. So too, though Matthew the Publican forsook the receipt of custom at the call of Christ, yet the answer of the Baptist to those Publicans who sought his baptism, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you," makes it plain that in his view the calling of a Publican did not involve anything necessarily inconsistent with the character of those, who were preparing by repentance for the coming of the kingdom of God; while with regard to military service (and naval service of course stands on precisely the same footing) we have the most distinct indications in Scripture of its entire consistency

with the character and calling of a servant of God. When those engaged on military service applied to St. John the Baptist to know what they should do by way of preparation for the Kingdom of God, he cautioned them against the besetting temptations of a soldier's life, but said not a word as to their withdrawing from it; on the contrary, by bidding them be content with their rations he assumed that they would remain in it. The centurion of Capernaum, the centurion of Caesarea, the devout soldier who waited on the latter, are three instances in which the calling and work of a soldier were combined with heartfelt and acceptable devotion to Almighty God. The Brethren, indeed, object to military service partly on the ground that a soldier's commission has to be derived from the "world;" but this is equally true of almost every other calling in which men can engage; and besides, as has been already pointed out, the world from which our earthly callings derive their origin is not the world which Scripture bids us to forsake.

With regard to intercourse with the society in which our lot is cast, the same rule holds good. We do not renounce social intercourse with our fellow-men, we only renounce such intercourse as would involve us in subjection to those three evil principles which rule where God is forgotten or unknown. Our Lord, though He denounced unsparingly the hollowness and hypocrisy of the Pharisees; though He inveighed against the insincerity of their teaching and the scandal of their example, did not hesitate to accept their hospitality and to hold social intercourse with them. Nor did the many evils which characterised the Publicans as a class hinder Him from going among them also, and taking His disciples with Him; and surely there is something in all this which calls for our imitation.

That there are circumstances under which Christians should withdraw from the society of others will of course be admitted by all. Any society which is found by experience to imperil our faith or our purity, or which would involve giving countenance directly or

indirectly to what is wrong, must be carefully avoided by those who would walk uprightly; and this, as much for the sake of those whose society they forsake as for their own. But it is one thing to insist on this, it is quite another to proscribe all ordinary social intercourse as evil, and to associate with those only whose religious convictions are the same as our own. Such general repudiation of our fellows may not in all cases spring from a Pharisaic spirit, but it is almost sure to generate one; and besides this it has a tendency to narrow the intellect and to cramp the affections, and to prevent the growth of that expansive sympathy which makes us ready according to our opportunities to do good unto all men. Christians should be the salt of the society in which they live, but how can they act in this capacity, if they withdraw from that which they should influence? How can our light shine before men, if at the bidding of the Brethren we hide it under a bushel? But the Brethren themselves have furnished us with an answer to much of their own teaching on

these points. For while they condemn the whole superstructure of human society as a doomed thing, they recognise its foundation—the family—as the ordinance of God. In Mr. Mackintosh's paper, "Thou and thy house," an analogy is drawn between the house of God and the house of God's servant, and much is said of the privilege and responsibility attaching to the household of a Christian man. His principles, his example, his authority are to be brought to bear on every member of his household. It is not that he can himself perform the work of grace, or directly dispose the hearts of the members of his household to walk in his steps, but he is warranted, as Mr. Mackintosh expresses it, in counting upon God for his family, and responsible to train up his children for God. In saying this Mr. Mackintosh is but echoing the teaching of St. Peter and St. Paul, who in the directions they give to husbands and wives, to parents and children, to masters and servants, imply, that it is in the power of Christianity to sanctify family life. Surely

then if the family, the root of all human society, be so capable of receiving Christian influence, the same must in its measure be true of those larger and wider organisations into which families eventually develope. If the root be holy, the branches must in some measure be holy also. If the family be capable of receiving and cherishing the sanctifying influences of the Christian faith, surely the same influences must be capable of affecting society at large. And does not the family represent to us in miniature the way in which these sacred influences operate in a wider sphere? Just as the Christian principle, the Christian example of the head of a household is the ordinary means by which its careless or godless members are won to recollection and religion, so the practical piety of individual Christians is the ordinary means of spreading through the different departments of society the influence of our most Holy Faith; and instances are not wanting in which the firmness and consistency of one man engaged in one of the common callings

of life has produced the most salutary effects on other followers of the same calling. Indeed, every man who avoids or withstands the temptations incidental to his position, and discharges its duties as in the sight of God, refutes the theory so common among the Brethren, that these callings are inconsistent with the privileges and duties of a Christian.

From the view which the stricter Brethren take of the present condition of the world we naturally gather that they regard with no favour the numberless philanthropic agencies, which are at work everywhere, and which have for their object the amelioration of our present life; indeed, so far from favouring them, they would rather seem to regard them with distrust and aversion. Not content with pointing out that philanthropy, commonly so called, can at the best do no more than alleviate temporal evils, and so can never become a substitute for Christianity, some of them speak as though the two were necessarily opposed, as though the very attempt to remove the evils of our present

state involved opposition to the Divine purposes, and a presumptuous setting aside of the sentence of condemnation which has been pronounced upon the world. One of their writers, speaking of philanthropic agencies, tells us¹, that the ground such agencies take is "unsafe for a believer," and "helps in fact to consummate the apostasy." The end proposed in them is "at the best man's moral and intellectual improvement," and this they regard as not only falling short of the Divine purpose, but as opposed to it. "In the estimation of God," we are assured, "the condition of man before him is so bad, that it is absolutely irremediable. . . . Hence the end of God's philanthropy is salvation, deliverance out of such a state, not the improvement of it," and so philanthropy is described as "the vain pretence of man to be wiser and better than God in dealing with evil and the misery of man." Again, we read, "Viewed in the light of God's truth philanthropy is the

¹ See a pamphlet entitled "Philanthropy," published by W. H. Broom.

mind of the things of the flesh." Accordingly, we are warned of "the necessary conflict" which must arise sooner or later between philanthropy and Christianity, and are assured that directly Christianity asserts its principles "it will cast such shame and contempt on the efforts of philanthropy as to be esteemed an enemy and a hindrance in its way."

It is clear that the above principles, if carried out to their logical conclusion, would utterly paralyse the efforts that are being made to remedy the evils of life. All reform in the system of secular education, all advance in science, all improvements in art and manufactures, all sanitary measures, must fall under this condemnation, for all are attempts to improve man's present condition. Nay, it is hard to see how medical science can form any exception to the rule. For does it not aim at improving the worldly condition of man? does it not in this sense "mind the things of the flesh"? and does not "death end its efforts"?

But there is an error which vitiates all their teaching in dealing with this question, on which a few words must be said. In speaking of philanthropy and Christianity as necessarily opposed, they forget, or, at all events do not give its due weight to the fact, that philanthropy is in its origin the direct offspring of Christianity.

It is not that the principle of improving the temporal condition of our fellows was entirely lost sight of under the earlier dispensations, but it is the Gospel which has given it its fullest development, its widest sphere of exercise. When the "love towards man"¹ (*φιλανθρωπία*) of God our Saviour was made manifest in the Incarnation and Death, the Resurrection and Ascension of our Blessed Lord, and more especially when His work on our behalf received its consummation in the coming of the Holy Ghost, then indeed the principle of doing good to all men received an impulse which it had never felt before; and while the main object of the Christian Church

¹ Titus iii. 4.



was ever to set forth the great salvation which God had provided, and to call on all around her to embrace it, she did not fail to exhibit her love towards man in relieving and bettering his temporal condition. Followers of Him, who in the days of His humiliation scattered temporal blessings on every side, the early Christians were ever ready to improve the earthly condition of those among whom they lived; and while they paid special regard to the claims of those who were of the household of faith, did not forget as they had opportunity to do good to all men. The precepts of feeding the hungry, of clothing the naked, of visiting the sick and the prisoners, laid down by our Blessed Lord in one of the most solemn of His discourses, and enforced at once by the brightest of His promises and the most terrible of His threatenings, lived on from age to age in the memory of His Church, till at last they became embodied in permanent institutions, which have exercised a widespread and lasting influence for good among mankind. And as the ad-

vance of knowledge has greatly enlarged the power of man to deal with the material evils existing around him, and to promote the temporal wellbeing and comfort of his fellows, the philanthropic spirit of the Christian Church has varied its forms, and multiplied its agencies, so that, as one of the Brethren acknowledges, "it is impossible to say to what extent man's actual misery may be mitigated, and the social system improved, by the mighty powers and resources of man now being developed, and by the use of Christianity itself, as one of the many means to obtain such an end."

And just as the temporal blessings bestowed by our Blessed Lord were the means of leading many to wait upon Him for higher and more enduring benefits, so has the diligence of the Christian Church in days gone by in improving the temporal condition of those around her, been the means of rousing enquiry and leading men to seek and secure their portion in those heavenly blessings, which it is her special work to proclaim and to convey.

Such then is the origin of the philanthropy on which the Brethren look with so much distrust; and such has been its practical working from the beginning until now. If ever indeed in some evil hour it should sever itself from the stock from which it sprung; if ever the improvement of man's worldly condition should become the be-all and the end-all of philanthropic effort, then not only would an antagonism arise between philanthropy and Christianity, but philanthropy itself would soon cease to be. For all experience goes to show, that nothing can lastingly establish right relations between man and man, except the maintenance of right relations between man and God. Cases may of course be cited in which a life of active benevolence has been associated with an erroneous creed, or even with the absence of any positive belief. But making allowance for this and any other exceptions, the truth remains unshaken, that human affection and human sympathy, when destitute of the refining influences of Christian grace and Christian

teaching, can never attain their full development. Cut off from Him who is the fountain of all pity and tenderness, deprived of the stimulus of the One perfect example, and of the deepening purifying influences of repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, they tend to confine themselves within the narrow round of earthly needs and interests, and thus they can never reach the deeper necessities of man's inmost spirit, or console him in his darkest hours of sorrow; but more than this, human sympathy and affection unsupported by higher influences are not proof in the long run against those tendencies to selfishness which exist in a measure in us all, and which at times develop themselves with surprising and even overwhelming power.

If the Brethren only wished to warn us against the sin of thus separating philanthropy from religion, and against the evils which must follow such separation, should it ever be brought about, we should have every reason to be grateful to them; and so far as they do set this issue clearly before us, we

gladly listen to what they say. But they go on to denounce philanthropy itself; they disparage the very object at which it aims. We have seen however that that object was distinctly sanctioned by our Lord Himself, was commended by Him again and again to His Disciples, and enforced as it had never been enforced before. We are therefore justified in regarding Him as being in the fullest and highest sense *the Founder of modern philanthropy*, as He is also the Author and Giver of that advanced scientific knowledge which has made philanthropic effort so much more efficient than it used to be in supplying the needs and in alleviating the sufferings and the sorrows of mankind.

In conclusion, we gladly acknowledge that there have been, and doubtless still are, many among the Brethren who, by their own charitable deeds, have furnished us with the most effectual, because the most practical refutation of the theory we have been considering. But this fact does not make it less necessary to denounce the theory itself as delusive and

dangerous, as complying with those fatal instincts of selfishness and covetousness which exist in a measure in us all, and as discouraging those efforts to improve man's temporal condition, by which Christianity has for so many ages commended itself to the nations of the earth.

CHAPTER IX.

PROPHECY.

ON the subject of the present chapter it will be impossible in a short treatise like the present to enter in any great detail; but no account of the teaching of the Brethren would be complete, which passed it over entirely. We have seen already, that from the earliest days of the movement the Brethren have devoted themselves to the study of prophecy. The conclusions at which they have arrived differ widely in several points from the general belief of Christendom, and indeed involve an entire recasting of the received interpretation of a large portion of the Scriptures. It will be necessary therefore to lay before the reader an outline of their views.

I. First, then, it is their belief that the coming (*παρουσία*) of our Blessed Lord to receive

the Church¹ is to be carefully distinguished from His final appearing (*ἐπιφάνεια*) in glory to take possession of the earth. The former event they maintain is referred to in His promise to His Disciples, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself," and in the prophetic declaration of St. Paul in 1 Thess. iv. 18, "The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." The latter event, the appearing in glory, is referred to in Col. iii. 4, "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with

¹ Attention may here be drawn to the different senses in which the Brethren use the word "Church." In their earlier writings it is usually applied to Christendom in general; the "Ruin of the Church" was one of their favourite themes. Afterwards the term was transferred to those assemblies, which they have set up as the Resource of the Faithful amid "the Ruin;" and lastly, in their treatises on Prophecy, it is applied to the whole company of Believers, who will have part in the Rapture, as distinguished from the Jewish Remnant, and those Gentiles who are to be converted by them after the Rapture.

Him in glory;" and in 2 Tim. iv. 1, where the Apostle speaks of the appearing and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These events are represented by them as separated by a considerable period of time, and as differing from each other widely in almost all their attendant circumstances. At one time their writers maintained that the coming of our Lord for His Church would be a secret coming—"the shout," "the voice of the Archangel," and "the trump of God," would be audible only to the faithful, and the rapture of the saints to meet the Lord in the air would be secret also; they would be missed among men, and sought for, but their place would be found no more. The secrecy of the coming however appears¹ to be no longer insisted on. But the distinction between the coming and the appearing is maintained as strongly as ever. The earlier event they assert is ever impending—no signs are to precede it, no historical events are to be expected before it takes place. It may happen at any mo-

¹ See "The Rapture of the Saints," by J. N. Darby, p. 5.

ment. Indeed it is a common practice among the Brethren, when making plans or engagements for the future, to add the condition, "If the Lord tarry." All that Scripture says as to the signs of the times, all its prophetic delineations of those events, which are to usher in the Day of the Lord, have to do not with "the coming" but with "the appearing." They do not concern "the Church." They are warnings intended for the Jews in the latter day; when the coming takes place, the whole Church—i. e. the whole company of Christian believers living and departed—will be translated to heaven; there will not be a single believer left on earth. And this rapture is to precede all the events predicted in the Book of Revelation from chapter iv. onwards. In that chapter we find the elders seated in Heaven; they represent the Church, and therefore Mr. Kelly concludes that the Church has been, at the period referred to at the opening of chapter iv, already translated to Heaven. "I see no reason to doubt that these chapters (iv. and v.) reveal the position of the glorified

saints above after Churches are no longer spoken of on earth." "It is properly a scene in heaven after the actual ecclesiastical state is closed, and before the millennium commences¹." And so Mr. Andrew Miller², speaking of the rapture of the saints, says, "Before a seal of judgment is broken, a trumpet blown, or a vial poured out, the saints are gone, all gone, gone to glory, gone to be with the Lord for ever! What a thought, what an event! Not a particle of the redeemed dust of God's children left in the grave; and not a believer left on the face of the whole earth." But what, the reader may ask, is to happen on the earth in the interval between the "coming" and the "appearing"? On this point the Brethren are particularly explicit, indeed, a very large portion of unfulfilled prophecy is regarded by them as referring to that period.

When the true Church has been removed from the scene of her earthly trial, the judg-

¹ "Lectures on the Revelation," by W. Kelly, p. 74.

² "The Brethren, their Origin, Progress, and Testimony," p. 151.

ments of God, long in mercy delayed, will fall upon the earth, and especially upon apostate Christendom, which is represented in the Apocalypse under the figure of Babylon. "The times of the Gentiles" will then have come to an end, and the prediction "thou also shalt be cut off" will receive its accomplishment. The powers of this world with which Christendom had allied herself will then prove to be her bitter foes, and while serving their own purposes in their dealings with her, will at the same time be executing upon her the righteous judgments of God.

Among these powers there is one which will have an especial prominence and attain universal dominion. This power, spoken of in the Apocalypse as the Beast, is believed by the Brethren to be simply the Roman Empire revived, and revived too as an especial embodiment of Satan's agency on earth. Its authority will be seconded and its claims enforced by another power which will arise in the East, and which is identified by them with the second Beast of the Apocalypse, and

by some with the Antichrist of St. Paul and St. John. The chief sphere of its influence will be Palestine, where its leading representative will eventually claim divine honours, and will be accepted by a large number of the Jews as their long-expected deliverer.

The restoration of this people—that is, of the two tribes as distinguished from the ten—is to take place through the influence of some maritime power soon after the “Rapture.” A large portion of them will return to their country in unbelief, and will begin to form alliances with Gentile kingdoms. When Antichrist appears, they will place themselves under His protection, and “He will confirm a covenant with many of them for one week”—i.e. for a period of seven years. By the terms of this covenant, their sacrificial worship at Jerusalem will be restored, and their worldly prosperity as far as possible secured. “In the midst of the week,” however, He will break His covenant, put an end to “the sacrifice and oblation,” and for the remaining

three years and a-half there shall be a time of trouble "such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." So far we seem to be witnessing nothing but an universal reign of evil. But meanwhile God has not left Himself without a witness; and while iniquity is abounding on every side a new dispensation is being inaugurated. At the time of the Rapture, the Brethren tell us, there will be a remnant among the Jews who will be eagerly looking for their Messiah, and resting on those divine promises of national restoration, the fulfilment of which has been so long delayed. In this faithful remnant the Spirit of God will begin to work as soon as the Rapture has taken place, and by them, as the missionaries of the new dispensation, the everlasting gospel is to be preached to "those who dwell on the earth, to every nation, and kingdom, and tongue, and people." It might perhaps be inferred from this that it is the Brethren's belief, that this remnant of the Jews would take up a position precisely analogous to that now occupied by the

Church, i. e. that they would embrace Christianity, with all its privileges and responsibilities, and convey to the nations of the earth the very same message which the Church had conveyed before them. But this is not their view. On the contrary, they distinguish between "the everlasting Gospel" spoken of in Rev. xiv, and "the Gospel of the grace of God," with which the Christian Church is charged. This latter, they say, is a message of mercy and of grace, whereas the everlasting Gospel to be preached hereafter by the Jewish remnant is a warning of coming judgment. The burden of its message is to be gathered, they tell us, from the words of the Angel who is represented in the vision as delivering it: "Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come, and worship Him who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water." Regarding these words as indicating a fundamental difference between the two Gospels, they go on to tell us that "this Jewish remnant has neither the Church's

heavenly blessings, nor the Church's hope¹." They recognise indeed in Jesus Christ their true Messiah, but they are looking forward, not to reigning with Him in heavenly glory, but to sharing "the earthly glory under Him in the land according to the promise made to them." "The Spirit of God," we are told, "is at work among them with the hopes proper to Israel." "They have Jewish faith, Jewish hopes, and rest on Jewish promises." To them the Brethren apply the larger proportion of those promises which the Church has ever regarded as her own. With them the Lord is said to have identified Himself in an especial way, in that portion of His sufferings of which the Darbyites speak as "non-aton-ing," while those portions of the Psalms which seem to be out of keeping with the spirit of our dispensation, such as cries for vengeance, imprecations on enemies, are explained by

¹ See Mr. J. N. Darby's pamphlet "The Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant," pp. 5, 7, 8, 10; also "Plain Papers on Prophetic Subjects," by W. Trotter, pp. 371-402; and "The Brethren," by Andrew Miller, pp. 153, 154.

them as expressing the feelings and wishes of the Jewish remnant in that dispensation of judgment of which they are to be the messengers. Thus the revival of Jewish hopes and Jewish privileges will, according to the teaching of the Brethren, be accompanied by a revival of that spirit of the old dispensation, which our Lord forbade His Disciples to cherish. The remnant are to have their full share in those terrible afflictions which are to fall on the nation at large; and it is amid these trials that they are to accomplish their allotted work of filling the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. In the course of this great work many will fall victims to the malice and hatred of man, and will thus be deprived of a share in "the Jewish hope" of dwelling in Palestine under the reign of Christ. But the system of the Brethren makes provision for these. It recognises them first in those souls under the altar, whom St. John describes in Rev. vi. as crying to God to avenge their blood. Such a prayer, we are told, could not rise from

Christian lips ; so we are to recognise in it the voice of the martyred remnant, who in so praying would only be echoing the spirit of the dispensation in which they had lived and died. Again, when in the account of the millennial reign of Christ we read, "I saw the souls of them which had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, . . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years," we are told to recognise in these not Christian martyrs, for they would have been taken to heaven long before, but simply the martyred remnant of faithful Jews, who having lost by death their share in the earthly blessings of their race, will be permitted to share in this way in the glories of the coming regeneration.

Meanwhile the efforts of the surviving remnant to bring the nations under the dominion of our Lord will receive an unexpected impulse from the return of the ten tribes to their own land. These tribes had no share in the great sin of their Jewish brethren, viz. the Crucifixion of our Lord, and therefore they will be spared any participation in those

terrible judgments which are yet to fall on the Jews in consequence of it. Moreover, instead of returning to the land, like the Jews, in unbelief, they will have previously recognised the claims of Jesus Christ; the rebels and transgressors will have been purged out from among them first, and will not be permitted to enter the land of Israel. With these new allies the remnant will continue their work till all the earth shall acknowledge the Lord.

But while these agencies are advancing the work of God among men, the powers of evil, on the other hand, will be getting worse and worse, and ripening for destruction; till at length, at the appointed time, our Lord will visibly descend from heaven, the armies of heaven, the angels, and the raptured saints following Him. The earthly powers, represented by the Beast and the False Prophet, with all their followers, will gather themselves together in opposition to Him, and will receive the utter destruction destined for them.

Then Satan, having been bound a thousand

years, the Empire of Christ will be established visibly on earth, with Jerusalem for its centre. The Saints of the Rapture and the martyred remnant of the Jews will reign *over* the earth. On earth the sons of Israel will enjoy the chief place of privilege and power, and the largest measure of earthly prosperity under the sway of their Messiah. But the blessings of His reign will extend themselves throughout the world. It is to this period that the Brethren, in common with other millennialians, refer those prophecies of universal peace and prosperity, which occupy so prominent a place in the writings of Isaiah. But though all will thus be brought to know the Lord, and to acknowledge Him outwardly, and though the incarceration of Satan will remove the chief source of human ills, still there will be evil at work under the fair outside, which the world will then have assumed. All will not be at heart the real servants of Him whose presence and power they can no longer deny; and the hollowness and hypocrisy thus cherished in the very presence of

the light will issue at last in a fresh outburst of evil. When the period of Christ's reign on earth has come to an end, Satan, being set free from his long imprisonment, and returning to his house from whence he came out, finds in it, notwithstanding the temporary cleansing it has undergone, all the materials for a fresh rebellion. Accordingly the powers of earth gather themselves together once more against the Lord and against His Christ; they come up from all sides over the breadth of the earth, and attack the seat of Christ's earthly Empire, *Jerusalem*. But they are destroyed by fire from heaven, and their leader then receives his final doom.

Last of all follows the judgment scene pourtrayed so briefly and yet so vividly in Rev. xx. This has generally been considered to represent the universal judgment of mankind, when all nations shall be called before the throne of Christ, and receive according to their works. But this interpretation comes into collision on more points than one with the teaching of the Brethren.

For first they maintain that the saints, i. e. the members of the Church of Christ, will never be judged at all. They will be made manifest indeed at the appearing of Jesus Christ, their works will be made known, they will receive the rewards of service, but they will not be judged according to their works ; i. e. the question of final acquittal or condemnation will not be in any way determined by them. The majestic scene pourtrayed in our Saviour's discourse on the Mount of Olives, and recorded in St. Matthew xxv, which appears to contradict this view, has no bearing, we are told, on the question. It does not, the Brethren assure us, refer to the last judgment at all. It sets forth our Lord's dealings with those nations of the earth who, after the Rapture of the Church, will hear the everlasting Gospel from the missionaries of the Jewish remnant, and who will be rewarded or punished according as they have received or rejected them.

And further, as we have seen, it is their belief, that the resurrection of the righteous

and that of the wicked will take place at periods separated from each other by more than a thousand years. This view is based on a literal interpretation of Rev. xx, and is of course held by many beside the Brethren. For both the above reasons the judgment scene described at the close of that chapter is regarded by them as representing the judgment of the wicked only. They will be judged according to their works, the degree of punishment being measured in each case by the degree of disobedience. But there still remains the difficulty, What is to become of those righteous men who died during the millennium, if the wicked alone are raised when it is over? To this Mr. Kelly answers, "There is no Scriptural proof that such die during the thousand years. What is said supposes the contrary. Therefore, if they die not during the millennium, there are no righteous to be raised at the end of it. They will be changed into the likeness of Christ, and transplanted into the new heaven and new earth ¹."

¹ "Lectures on the Revelation," pp. 383, 384.

The new Jerusalem, including the Saints of the Rapture, the Saints of the Old Testament, and the Martyrs of the Jewish remnant, will then descend out of heaven from God, and from thenceforth the tabernacle of God will be with men.

Such, then, is the picture which the Brethren have furnished us of the things which are to be hereafter. Certain elements in it will be already familiar to many of our readers, as adopted from older schools of prophetic interpretation. But there are certain distinctive features contributed by the Brethren on which it will be necessary to say a few words. These are, first, the Rapture of the Saints before the appearing of Christ; secondly, the character and work of the Jewish remnant; thirdly, and in very close connection with these two subjects, the peculiar opinions put forth by the Brethren as to the day of judgment will come under review.

(1) First, then, as to the Rapture of the Saints before the appearing of Jesus Christ. We naturally ask on what scriptural grounds

do the Brethren suppose it to rest? Two passages frequently cited by them as referring to this Rapture have been quoted already, viz. St. John xiv. 5 and 1 Thess. iv. 13-18. On the second of these two passages more will be said presently, but it may be noticed at once that while both alike point clearly to the eventual fulfilment of the Church's hope of being "ever with the Lord," they neither of them prove anything as to that hope receiving its accomplishment before our Saviour's final appearing in glory. Another passage on which the Brethren rely is Colossians iii. 4, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." From this they argue, that, if the Church is to be manifested in glory with Christ when He appears, it must be caught up to meet Him before He appears. So fully satisfied was their late leader with the force of this argument, that on the strength of it he declared "the Rapture before the appearing of Christ" to be "a matter of express revelation¹." When,

¹ 'The Rapture of the Saints,' p. 50.

however, we remember that the passage admits of being rendered "when Christ, who is our life, shall have appeared," we shall pause before we sacrifice to an arbitrary interpretation of a single verse the consentient testimony of the rest of Scripture. Again, we are referred to passages which assert that our Lord at His appearing will be attended by ten thousands of His saints; from this they argue, that if the saints are to accompany our Lord on His return from heaven, they must have been translated to heaven before His return; but a careful comparison of different passages bearing on the second advent will show that the saints, or "holy ones," who will accompany our Lord from heaven, will not be the redeemed from among men, but the "Holy Angels." It is after this manifestation that the elect are to be gathered together. Further, the Brethren rely on a distinction already alluded to between the *παρουσία*, coming of Christ, and the *ἐπιφάνεια*, or the appearing in glory. But an examination of the general use of the former term in the New

Testament will make it quite evident that the distinction is arbitrary and unfounded, and that as a matter of fact the "coming," the "appearing," and "the day of the Lord," are simply three names for one and the same event, viz. our Saviour's second coming in glory to judge the world.

The first time the word *παρουσία* occurs is in St. Matthew xxiv, where the disciples ask, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming (*τῆς σῆς παρουσίας*), and of the end of the world?" and are told in ver. 37 that that *παρουσία* shall dawn upon mankind with the rapidity and the visibility of lightning, and shall overwhelm the careless and sinful as the flood overwhelmed the ancient earth, as the fire and brimstone from Heaven overwhelmed the cities of the plain (vv. 27, 37-40). Here then the coming plainly refers to the visible appearing of the Lord from heaven to gather together His elect, and to take vengeance on them that know not God; and accordingly, in the parallel passage, St. Luke xvii, we find St. Matthew's word *παρουσία* paraphrased by

the expression "the day in which the Son of Man shall be revealed"—in other words the "coming" is here identified with the "appearing." Turning to the Epistle to the Thessalonians, on which the Brethren appear chiefly to rely in dealing with this question, we find one passage at least in which the "coming" is clearly identified with the "appearing;" for the Apostle, in chap. iii. 5, prays that the hearts of his converts may be established blameless in holiness at the coming (*παρουσία*) of our Lord Jesus Christ *with all His Saints*. The plain indication afforded by the words "with all His Saints," as to the sense of the word "coming" in this passage, at once declares its meaning in the parallel passage 1 Thess. v. 23, and might naturally lead us to expect a similar use of it throughout these two Epistles; but as this conclusion is challenged by the Brethren, we must look at the passages in which it occurs one by one. In chap. ii. 19 we read, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus

Christ at His coming?" but a reference to a parallel passage in 2 Cor. i. 14 will shew that the coming here spoken of is identical with that "day of the Lord" from which the Brethren so carefully distinguish it. "Ye have also acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, as ye also are ours *in the day of the Lord Jesus.*" The Brethren indeed are willing to allow that the word "coming" may sometimes be used to signify the final "appearing" of Jesus Christ, but they strongly insist that in chap. iv. 15 it has the meaning they assign to it and no other—that it refers, i. e., not to the day of Christ, but to a Rapture of the Saints which is to precede that day by a considerable period. Let us see how far this is borne out by the context. Immediately after describing the circumstances of the *παρουσία*, the Apostle goes on to say, "But of the times and seasons ye have no need that I write unto you; for yourselves know that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night, and when men shall say peace and all things are safe, then sudden destruc-

tion cometh upon them," etc. Here the *παρουσία*, "coming," of chap. iv. 15 is identified in chap. v. with the day of the Lord in which sudden destruction shall fall upon the wicked, while the Thessalonians are exhorted not to sleep, but to watch and be sober by way of preparing for it. The whole exhortation in chap. v. 1-11, indeed, bears a striking resemblance to our Lord's own words on the Mount of Olives as recorded by St. Luke xxi. 34: "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life, and so *that day* come upon you unawares." It is clear, then, that the First Epistle affords no shelter whatever to the theory of the Brethren as to the distinction between the coming and the appearing, nor does the Second Epistle countenance it. For in chap. i. the afflicted Thessalonians are bidden to look for their final deliverance from their troubles, not to any "Rapture of the Saints" before the "appearing," but to the appearing itself, "when the Lord Jesus shall

be revealed from heaven with His mighty Angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God." In the second chapter the "coming" is once more identified with the day of Christ: "Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the 'coming' of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him, . . . that ye be not soon shaken in mind, neither be troubled as that the day of Christ is now at hand." Further on we read that that day is to be preceded by the development of the Apostasy, and the manifestation of the man of sin, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming (*παρουσία*). Here then the *παρουσία* at which the saints are gathered together is twice identified with the day of the Lord when Antichrist is to be destroyed. It may be added that in the Second Epistle of St. Peter, whose phraseology is much influenced by St. Paul, when he is dealing with the same subjects, the "coming" for which Christians are to look is expressly identified

with the day "when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (cp. 2 Pet. iii. 4, 12).

But the New Testament not only affords no grounds for the distinction thus arbitrarily drawn by the Brethren, it also distinctly refutes it, for it shows first that the Church is to remain on earth till "the end of the world," i. e. till Christ's final appearing in glory; and secondly, that that appearing and not any previous rapture is "the hope of the Church."

The first of these positions is implied in several of the passages just quoted, but in no part of Scripture is it more clearly set forth than in that parable of the tares, which has been appealed to in a former chapter. There we are expressly told that the good seed, the children of the kingdom, are to grow together with the tares, the children of the wicked one, until the harvest; and the harvest is identified with the end of the world, i. e. with the time when the Son of Man shall send forth His Angels, and they shall gather out of His king-

dom all offences and those who do iniquity. Indeed, all those discourses in which our Lord speaks about His second coming in glory imply that those whom He is addressing, or rather the Church which they represented, would remain on earth till He came. Or why does He say to the future founders of His Church, when speaking of the signs of His appearing, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." Why does He bid them watch lest that day come upon them unawares? Why does He promise the same holy men to be with them in their work of evangelising the nations "all the days even to the end of the world," if long before that period comes all Christians are to be caught up to meet Him in the air, and "not a believer is to be left on the face of the whole earth"?

Moreover, that the final appearing of our Blessed Lord in glory is really the hope of the Church is plain as soon as we see that the coming and the appearing are identical.

But it is well to notice one or two passages in which it is expressly asserted. In Titus ii. 13, St. Paul describes Christians as looking for the blessed hope, and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Again, Timothy is exhorted to keep the commandment without spot, without reproach, *until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The theory we have been considering has doubtless arisen partly from a desire to reconcile those statements of Scripture which speak of the coming of Christ as ever impending, with those which indicate a long series of events which are to happen before it arrives. Scripture itself reconciles the two sets of statements by reminding us that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Surely they need no further reconciliation; and if they did, the theory of the Brethren would not provide it. They tell us that no "signs" or "events" are to usher in the "coming;" but have no events taken place since the promise of the coming was given? Has not the gospel of the king-

dom been preached in nation after nation? Have there not been wars and pestilences, famines, earthquakes, and persecutions? In other words, have not many of the predicted signs of "the appearing" already taken place before "the coming"? and if so, where is the sense of saying that no event intervenes between the Christian and the coming of the Lord? To say that events take place on earth while the Church's calling is heavenly, and that therefore the Church has nothing to do with events, is simply "to darken counsel by words without knowledge." Indeed, the theory of the Brethren on this subject lies open to the very same objection which they bring against the received doctrine of the Church, and it labours moreover, as we have shown, under the additional disadvantages that "it cannot be proved by Holy Writ and is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture."

(2) We have seen already that the Brethren, when pressed with passages from our Lord's discourses which militate against their theories

as to the Rapture and the Appearing, are wont to declare that such passages have nothing to do with the Church, but are intended for the Jewish remnant in the latter day, and are addressed to the Apostles, not as representing the Church, but as representing that remnant. We have seen also that they regard the remnant as founders of a dispensation differing in some important particulars from that under which we live, and indeed closely resembling that which it displaced. How far are their views on this subject borne out by the Scriptures to which they appeal?

Now "the remnant" is an expression borrowed from the Old Testament, and employed by the New Testament writers to designate those Jews who accepted the offer of the gospel salvation, and were accordingly admitted by baptism into the Church of Christ. To this remnant belonged the holy Apostles themselves; to this remnant belonged the three thousand who were added to the Church at Pentecost; while St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, after dwelling on and accounting

for the temporary rejection of the Jews, takes comfort in the thought that amid the general rejection there was still, as in the days of Elias, a remnant according to an election of grace (a remnant to which he himself belonged), whose very existence was a proof that God had not cast away His people—a pledge that in the end He would have mercy upon them all. This Jewish remnant in fact formed the nucleus of the Christian Church: “To these¹ first God having raised up His Son Jesus sent Him to bless them;” these were they who “*first* trusted in Christ²;” and those who from among the Gentiles turned to God in after days were added to them, made one body with them. We should naturally infer from this that “the Jewish remnant of the latter day” would consist, like the remnant of Apostolic times, of those Jews who will recognise in Jesus Christ their long-expected Messiah, and seek for admission to those privileges of the Christian dispensation which the mass of their countrymen have for so

¹ Acts iii. 26.

² Ephesians i. 12.

many centuries rejected. But we are not left to conjecture in this matter. The very passages to which the Brethren refer us, as indicating God's future dealings with the Jews, bear in many cases the most express testimony to their admission to the very privileges which we enjoy. Take first the passage of Zechariah xii. 13, "I will pour upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they shall look on Me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn; . . . and in that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Here we have a description of true repentance—a repentance founded on a recognition of Him against whom they had sinned, and consequently involving that faith in Him, which is required of all who would enjoy Christian privilege. Then on this repentance and faith there follows that admission to the fountain for sin and uncleanness, which is an especial characteristic of our dispensation. All this was literally ful-

filled in that portion of the remnant which heard the gospel from St. Peter on the great day of Pentecost; and we have already learned from St. Paul, that the mercies then bestowed on them and on those who afterwards obeyed the same call, are an earnest and a pledge of the eventual extension of the same blessings to the nation at large. Or take the prophecy of Jeremiah, which Mr. Darby, in his pamphlet on the Law, expressly refers to the remnant in the latter day: "This is the covenant that I will make with them in those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws in their inward parts and write them upon their hearts . . . and all shall know Me from the least unto the greatest, for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more." In these last words we have the Christian privilege of pardon and justification clearly set forth as the future portion of Israel. In the earlier verses we find the privilege of sanctification also assured to them, while the writer of the Epistle to the

Hebrews¹ expressly cites these verses as descriptive of the present dispensation, and thus identifies the future relations of God with His people Israel with His present relations with those whom He has called from among the Gentiles.

A similar conclusion follows from the prophecy of Amos, which is cited by St. James in the Council of Jerusalem: "After these things, I will return and build up again the tabernacle of David that is fallen down, and will build again the ruins thereof and will set it up, that the residue of men might seek the Lord." Now St. James in the speech above alluded to sees the fulfilment of this prophecy in that gathering, first of Jewish, then of Gentile converts into the Christian Church which his own days had witnessed. The Brethren believe that it has a yet further fulfilment awaiting it in the faithful remnant at the latter day, and in the rapid spread of the knowledge of God among the Gentiles through their ministry. Such a view is not

¹ Hebrews x. 15-17.

a contradiction, but simply an extension of St. James's inspired interpretation. But surely when read in the light of St. James's speech, the prophecy suggests not the inauguration of a new dispensation "with Jewish hopes and Jewish promises," but the admission of God's ancient people into the Christian covenant.

Or, to turn once more to St. Paul's declarations in Romans xi, have we not a clear indication of the very same truth in the following passage, "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" It must be clear, I think, that the casting away here referred to consisted *not* in the loss of earthly privileges, but in their exclusion from those spiritual blessings of the Christian covenant of which they had "judged themselves unworthy;" but if so, to what can the receiving of them refer, but to their eventual admission to these privileges?

It is not of course denied that there are indications in ancient prophecy that a period

of great temporal prosperity will follow on the restoration of Israel to the divine favour, though the practice adopted by Scripture writers of representing spiritual blessings under earthly images should warn us against pressing a literal interpretation on all such passages. Still, allowing that such a period of prosperity is awaiting them, we must still insist, that the greatest of all the blessings in store for them will be their admission into that covenant of grace, which their fathers rejected of old. Whatever earthly blessings may be their lot in the latter day, it is to these spiritual blessings that the writers of the New Testament evermore direct their thoughts; and therefore the Brethren, in maintaining the Jewish character of the expectations, the worship, the privileges, of the restored sons of Israel, in declaring that they "have no portion either in the Church's heavenly blessings, or in the Church's hope," are really robbing the bright and glorious future which Scripture spreads before them, of what is indeed its chief joy.

It will follow from all this, that the distinction drawn by the Brethren between the everlasting gospel to be preached by the Jewish remnant, and the gospel of the grace of God with which the Church is charged, cannot be maintained. If the remnant are to be admitted to the privileges of the Christian covenant, they can preach no other gospel than that which they have received as partakers of that covenant¹.

When the Brethren argue that because the everlasting gospel spoken of in the Revelation is ushered in by a call "to fear God and give Him glory," and by an announcement of approaching judgment, that therefore that everlasting gospel must needs be different from the message of mercy contained in the gospel of peace, they are forgetting that the Christian dispensation itself was ushered in by a like warning of judgment, a like call to repentance: "Flee from the wrath to come;" "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire;" "Whose

¹ Gal. i. 8, 9.

fan is in His hand, and He shall thoroughly purge His floor." These were the words with which the great forerunner heralded the coming kingdom of the Lord. Nor was the warning different when the message of mercy was proclaimed by St. Paul among the Gentiles: "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts xvii. 31). Indeed it seems to be God's method to introduce His offers of mercy by distinct warnings against the sins from which that mercy saves us, and against the ultimate consequences of those sins if unforsaken. These considerations go to shew that the angelic warning quoted above, so far from distinguishing the everlasting gospel from the gospel of the grace of God, rather serves to identify them.

It is clear then that there is no breach of continuity between the Christian Church as represented by the Gentiles now, and the believing Jewish remnant at the latter day; both are represented in Scripture as grafted

into the same olive-tree, even into that mystical body of Christ in which Jew and Gentile are one. As the Gentiles who in early days believed and were baptized became "fellow heirs and of one body" with the converted remnant of Israel, so will the remnant of the Jews who "turn to the Lord" at the latter day become "fellow heirs and of one body" with those who had been previously called from among the Gentiles; and thus the Christian Church from first to last will retain the character ascribed to it in Scripture as the Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Jerusalem above, which is the mother of us all. It will be remembered that St. Paul assures us that the reception of God's ancient people into the Divine covenant will be "life from the dead" to the Gentile world, i. e. will result in a large accession to the Church from among the heathen. But this bright prospect would be hopelessly clouded over, if the remnant, instead of accepting the faith once delivered to the saints, are to become the inaugurators of

a quasi-legal dispensation, the preachers of a retrograde Gospel.

(3) The third subject which comes under notice in connection with the views of prophecy in vogue among the Brethren is the Last Judgment. The Brethren deny that there is any universal judgment, in which all men will be called before the throne of Christ, and receive according to their works. We have seen already how they dispose of the judgment scene in St. Matt. xxv. 31-46, which seems to contradict this view, viz. by referring it to a judgment upon living nations, which is to precede the setting up of Christ's kingdom on earth. We have seen also that the judgment scene in Rev. xx. is explained by them as referring to a judgment of the wicked dead only. A careful examination of these two passages, and a comparison of them with each other, will effectually remove the gloss by which the Brethren have robbed them of their right interpretation, and will show that the matter treated of in both passages is the same, viz. the final judgment of the human

race. To take first the scene set before us in St. Matt. xxv. The very words by which it is introduced, "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him," serve to connect the prophetic description that follows with an earlier declaration of our Lord's, "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He shall reward every man according to his work." In this passage our Lord is clearly speaking of an universal judgment in connection with His own coming in glory—"He shall reward every man," even as we read in St. Matthew, "before Him shall be gathered all nations." Again, as the judgment in both passages is universal, so the principle of judgment is in each passage the same,—“He shall reward every man according to his work;” “Inasmuch as ye have *done it* unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me. Inasmuch as ye *did it not* to the least of these My brethren, ye did it not to Me.” And further, the decision in each case is a final one. For the passage in St. Matt.

xvi. is introduced by way of enforcing the solemn question, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" while the scene described in chapter xxv. concludes with the words, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal."

Now compare all this with the judgment scene in Rev. xx. Here we have the throne set, and one sitting thereon, the books opened, the dead, small and great, standing before God, and judged out of the things written in the books according to their works. Those who are not found written in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire; those who are found written therein are admitted to heavenly joys of the new Jerusalem¹. Is it not clear that both descriptions refer to one event? The only point of difference is, that in the latter the dead only are mentioned, while in the former the subjects of the judgment are said to be "all nations." But it is

¹ Rev. xxi. 27.

the method of Holy Scripture, in dealing with a great subject like this, to present now one aspect of it, now another, in order that every portion of the truth may be in turn impressed upon the mind. Thus in the discourse on the Mount of Olives, though so much is said about the judgment, not a word is said about the resurrection; the disciples are addressed throughout as though they would still be living when the second Advent takes place. Not because there will be no resurrection before the final judgment, but because our Blessed Lord, desiring to impress on His disciples' minds the reality and certainty of the judgment, places it in the foreground of His description, and makes no mention of the event which must usher it in.

In other passages, as in 1 Cor. xv, we hear of the resurrection without a word about the judgment, not because no judgment is to follow the resurrection, but because the Spirit is in these passages impressing upon us another portion of the truth.

In short, the different declarations of Holy

Scripture on this mysterious subject are meant to supplement each other, and our ideas concerning it are to be gathered, not from this or that particular passage only, but from a comprehensive view of all. We must never therefore conclude from the omission of some one circumstance in this or that particular passage, that it is to be omitted from our conception of the judgment as a whole; nor when another passage supplies the omission, must we conclude that the two passages must refer to distinct events. This principle is so obvious and so familiar to most readers of Holy Scripture, that it would be superfluous to dwell upon it, were it not that the Brethren in dealing with this and kindred subjects systematically ignore it.

Turning now to the second chapter of Romans, we find another distinct assertion of the universality of the judgment. Here, too, the rule of judgment is the same with that which has been already mentioned:—
“He shall render to every man according to his deeds; to them that by patient continu-

ance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality—eternal life;” while to those who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. Here, then, we find good and evil alike concerned in the final judgment, both alike receiving, without respect of persons, according to their works, “in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.” This last passage carries back our thoughts to a much earlier declaration on the same subject in the Book of Ecclesiastes, where it is declared that “God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.”

Later on, in the Epistle to the Romans, there is if possible a still more emphatic assertion, that believers as well as unbelievers will have to endure the scrutiny of the great day. In chapter xiv. the Apostle is exhorting Christians to avoid the sins of judging or despising each other; and he enforces his

teaching by the reflection, "For we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ;" "We shall each of us give account of *himself* to God. Let us therefore not judge *one another* any more." In 2 Cor. v. we have another testimony to the same truth. "We labour," says the Apostle, "that whether present or absent (i. e. whether alive or dead at the coming of Christ) we may be accepted of Him. For we must *all* (i. e. all Christians) be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one of us may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil." This the Brethren explain by saying that the saints will appear with Christ in glory, and receive the rewards of service, but will not be judged according to their works. But how can such a gloss be reconciled with the solemn words which follow the Apostle's declaration, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" ?

Again, St. Peter, in addressing those who were elect according to the foreknowledge of

God the Father, who were being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, urges them to pass the time of their sojourning here in fear, on the very ground that the Father whom they worshipped was one, who, without respect of persons, judges according to every man's work; but what would be the force of such an exhortation if the saints are not to be judged at all, or at all events, not to be judged according to their works? It would be easy to multiply quotations in defence of a truth which stands in the very forefront of the Gospel revelation, but the passages just quoted may suffice.

The hostility of the Brethren to the doctrine of an universal judgment arises to a great extent from an idea that any view of judgment being according to works must be "legal." Hence their constant endeavours to refer all passages which imply such a judgment to God's future dealings either with the Jews or the heathen. In their eagerness to vindicate the gratuitousness of the Divine mercy bestowed upon the Church, they lay

far too little stress on the return which God requires from those to whom so much has been given, and on His repeated declarations that He will require of each one of them an account of the return they have made. It must be remembered, moreover, that the object of the day of judgment, as set before us in Scripture, is not merely the final disposal of man, but the vindication of God's justice and mercy before the assembled creation. But how can this vindication take place unless there be a complete unveiling of the hidden things of darkness, a complete manifestation of the counsels of the hearts? All this of course the Brethren will fully admit as far as the wicked are concerned; but we may ask further, how can the depths of God's "goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering," in the case of each soul among the saved, be fully manifested, unless the sins against which His grace and mercy had to strive are to be manifested also? When Scripture speaks of God putting away the sins of believers, and remembering them no more, it means that He

will not impute them for condemnation¹; it does not mean that such sins will form an exception to the universal rule, "There is nothing secret which shall not be made manifest, neither anything hidden but that it shall be known and come abroad."

For these and other reasons the subject of the final judgment had a very prominent place in the teaching of the ancient Church, and in the thoughts of the early Christians. It was one of those four last things on which they were taught to meditate daily. In the light of that day they were to view all their thoughts, words, and deeds, to endeavour to see them here as they will see them there; and thus the thought of the coming scrutiny became one of the greatest safeguards of the spiritual life, checking those tendencies to self-complacency on the one hand, and to presumptuous confidence in God's favour on the other, which their high gifts and graces might otherwise have produced in them. And

¹ See Hebr. x. 17, 18: "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. Now where *remission* of these is," &c.

the same doctrine has performed the same good office in every age towards those who have made the same practical use of it. But if men are to be taught that if they believe on Christ they will not be judged at all, or not be judged according to their works, the practical safeguard provided by this great truth is taken away, and their souls become exposed at once to one or other of those subtle forms of temptation of which mention has been made. Happily men are often much better than their theories, and so these evils may not always follow in point of fact: but still false principles have a terrible way of working out their natural consequences in those who are nurtured in them; and it would be a bad omen indeed for the future of English religion were the erroneous teaching of the Brethren on this subject to be generally received.

THE END.



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