

[*Private, for those in fellowship only.*]

Is it SUBJECTION to the HOLY GHOST ?
Or, to a COMMITTEE ?



Were it not that the title and claims of the Lord Jesus Christ are before us, and that questions are put to me upon the causes of our present division, and applications for advice from those in sorrow and distress, because of the impending rupture throughout all the gatherings at home and abroad ; I might still remain silent, and stand apart from the strife and tumult.

If I say a word now, it is not to bring forward "the new test" for discussion, of what think ye of Reading, &c., but to use it as the lamentable proof, of the demoralisation into which we have sunk.

By separation from evil, we had come out from the religious systems which exist all around, and by position and confession of the glories of Christ, and of "The House of God, the pillar and ground of the truth," sought to walk in obedience and fellowship *with all* who by grace, would accept this path.

Dependence on the sufficiency of God, and confidence in the Lord's love to His Saints, with refusal of the world, and in self judgment, marked those who from the first were led out by

the Holy Ghost, through the Word. And here let me add—humbling as it is to do so—that, as matter of fact for to-day, all this has come to nought—and that Reading and London are but the outcome and proof of a common moral condition.

One and another of those whom the Lord preserved to us so long, but who are now gone to be with Him, foresaw this declension and falling away. Mr. Wigram had said, that “brethren’s testimony was gone,” and Mr. Darby was exercised as to leaving us, and going outside, because “of the demoralisation that had set in.”

What then shall we say, or what shall we do, when the verification of their forebodings, and of *our* sin, mounts up to nothing less, than the profanation of the Church of God, and under *the plea of maintaining His righteousness?* We may ask with confusion of face, what other trespass than *this* can the indictments, founded on suggestive, and suggested thoughts, and personalities be; and especially when they are sought to be proved and forced upon an Assembly, for examination and judgment. And we are the witnesses that this *is* what the Assembly at Queen’s Road, Reading, has been reduced to.

The grace and truth of Christianity in practice, and even the example of Christ, have been sacrificed to *proud, yea, very proud* flesh—so that by means of its subtlety or refinement, place has been given to the devil, and the Holy Spirit grieved.

It has also been overlooked that were gatherings elsewhere, inspected under microscopic-lens, and by such heat as some of the printed pamphlets of 1884 and 1885 manifest, similar under-ground suspicions would be detected, and call for similar investigation and judgment.

Let us turn away from this, to look at the Lord, and the light in which He viewed men and things as in John viii — “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone,” and the accusers went out one by one. How much better He settles things with us, each and all, and how admirably does the light act, in contrast to Moses, and the stoning by the law !

Since the departure of those faithful men, who commended themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and were of authority among us, by the power of the truth, and in the Holy Ghost, brethren have gradually fallen into a committee of management, either metropolitan or provincial, and accepted its control and edicts. What guarantee can a committee, even of the most godly men, give to “the house, the church of the living God,” for the maintenance either of the faith, or the consciences of the saints therein ? On the contrary, it is the very thing that separates individual faith and responsibility from the word of God and the guidance of His Spirit, and plunges saints everywhere into uncertainty, confusion, and distress, as at this present crisis.

Well do I remember when seven or eight well known brothers, met together at Plymouth in 1848, to draw up a formula for general acceptance, at a time of great difficulty ; and found

they had no other course than to level-down to the points on which they could agree—in fact to accept the *minimum* (as regards the claims of the Lord, and the church of God, they had violated His authority, and “The pillar and ground of the truth” by giving up their individual consciences to a committee). On this document being reported to another, who was nearer the Lord, he gravely asked what had become of the *maximum*, which is the Lord’s lot.

How can the Saturday night’s committee at Cheapside answer *this* to Him?

Can it be that by such ways and means, brethren give us proof that they are “on divine ground” as it is affirmed—or, is it departure from it?

Can it be that they are “clearing the testimony” as is said by their division—by the violation of the one body, and one spirit?

Can it be that their hope is by this test of Queen’s Road to develop another “new lump” out of those who pass through this ordeal?

Read an article in “The Voice, thoughts for this day” vol. xv. called “Who is in the testimony?” Such exclusions and tests as it contains must, sooner or later, put an end to the true testimony, that is, if it be in the unity of the Spirit, and in the unity of the faith, and not in a high-class school! Compare *this* with Hebrews xi., “and its cloud of witnesses,” of whom the Holy Ghost says, “the world was not worthy.” In which of these *two* testimonies can you find a place?

Is not all this the practical contradiction of the person, and name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom we are gathered together, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the fellowship of the spirit ?

My only object is to call very serious attention to the inquiry : Is it subjection to the Holy Ghost, and to the Lordship of Christ in the church, or to a committee ? And here I stop, only adding some weighty remarks from well-known brethren. I have only to cry to my brethren “*Halt,*” in the certainty, that God will take better care of His righteousness in the church, than is being done in the way of zeal, and the sword, and division.

JAMES E. BATTEN.

Cheltenham, April 13, 1885.

From Mr. Darby to T. B. P.

July, 1, 1880.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

As regards division I am as decided as possible. Not only so, but when Mr. Stoney wrote to me an account of Close's meetings, I wrote at once to say so. I would no more go with a party against evil, than with the evil itself, and quoted Is. viii, 12, 13. I know, and knew before I left France—but found it much more forward than I was aware of when I returned. I don't believe that is either faith or godliness. I am pretty well aware of the springs which have moved in it. It would still be a question whether God was going to set aside the brethren. If He does certainly I should not go with any party in it. I have long felt that the party which assume to be the godly one is the one to be feared. They are tired with evil I admit, but that is not

faith. I should add that Stoney wrote in reply that he was as far from division as I could suppose, but I do not think he knows what he is doing. But suffice it to say with no party action, will I have anything to do save to reject it.

J. N. D.

Sevenoaks, March 5, 1885.

“This Metropolitan terrorism seems worthy of the Irish Dynamite Party.”

March 27.

The “new lump” party outwardly seem to have scored a success up to this, but one cannot but think the Lord has a controversy in the matter which has not yet come to the surface—for if all bow to the London fiat, it still leaves many on scarcely speaking terms with one another, which is hardly a state of things calculated to last.”

F. W. B.

The Grove Boltons, March 8.

I feel that he (J. B. S.) has been drawn into complicity with these people in a very sad way. He ought to know better. One would think that the surrender of the *oneness of the body*, which has been made, would have frightened him. It cannot stand—it will put an end to *brethren*—and a faithful remnant will be the result of it all. I feel very much tried. If where I meet (Chelsea) they go with Park St., how should I act with my decided views of the one body? Perhaps go on for the present till things become more developed.

Sir E. D.

*Copies may be had by Sending a Directed Wrapper to J. E. B.,
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