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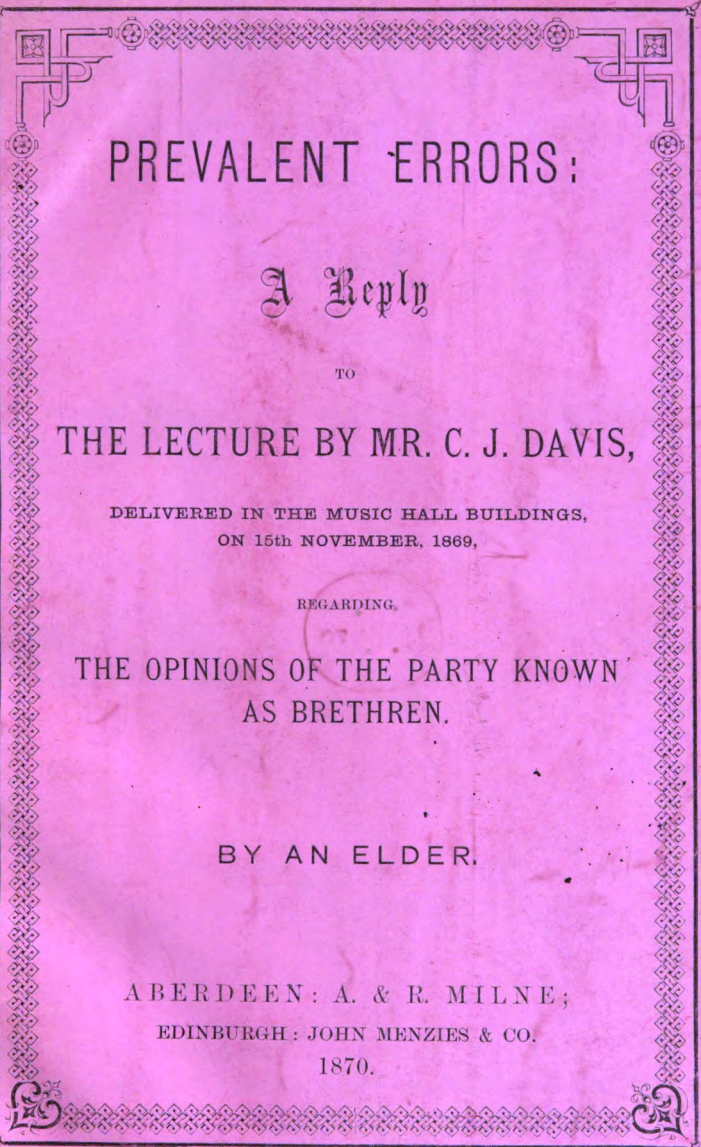








4135. aa. 38.



PREVALENT ERRORS:

A Reply

TO

THE LECTURE BY MR. C. J. DAVIS,

DELIVERED IN THE MUSIC HALL BUILDINGS,  
ON 15th NOVEMBER, 1869,

REGARDING,

THE OPINIONS OF THE PARTY KNOWN  
AS BRETHERN.

BY AN ELDER.

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## PREFACE.



THE AUTHOR has little to say by way of preface to the following pages—they must be allowed to speak for themselves. If, as we believe, it is truth for which they contend, the truth will be vindicated although the Author may have failed in his attempt.

The name is not appended for the sufficient reason that here the authorship is sufficiently known, and the name is too obscure to render it worth anything elsewhere.

It is only necessary further to say that the Author does not court controversy, but much otherwise; and he will not continue it further unless necessity is laid upon him, or some abler hand does not take up the cause, if further vindication is found necessary.

ABERDEEN, 6th Jan., 1870.



# PREVALENT ERRORS:

A REPLY TO MR. DAVIS' LECTURE.



## INTRODUCTION.

CONTROVERSY should not be a pleasant thing, and, certainly, is very seldom a very profitable thing. It should never be waged for victory, but purely for truth. We know well how difficult it is to maintain the proper spirit even when contending for what we firmly believe to be the truth; at the same time, it is a duty to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and the difficulty of fulfilling the duty in the right spirit, does not discharge from the performance, but only enforces the necessity of entering upon it in a spirit at once humble and prayerful as regards one's self, in a spirit of meekness and of love as respects the brother whom we believe to be in error, and in a spirit of as complete abnegation of self as can possibly be reached,—striving, as we have already said, not for the honours of victory, but for the interests of truth. It is in this spirit that we at least desire to enter upon a consideration of the Reply which has been offered to the tract, “A few Counsels regarding some Prevalent Errors,” if, indeed, we should not rather say, the refutation attempted of the reasoning contained in the tract.

We learn, with some surprise, that the designation, "Plymouth Brethren," is regarded as offensive and injurious. Assuredly it was not used by the writer as a term of contumely or reproach, but as the distinctive name by which, as he believed, the brethren were universally known with their own full approbation, or, at least, consent. It would be unfair and wrong to use the term, so long as it is regarded by the parties concerned as offensive, and of this unfairness we shall strive not to be guilty. We drop the appellation at once for the more general one of brethren, to which, we presume, they will make no objection; and in this, at all events, we desire to be thoroughly at one with them, to "call no man on earth our master, for one is our Master who is in heaven," and in Him we earnestly wish to be brethren with them.

We have conceded to them our belief that they are really lovers and friends of our common Lord, but they will concede to us, that, wherein we believe them to be in error in regard to the common faith, we are bound in fidelity to our common Master and Head, to try at least to convince them, just as we are willing, on the other hand, to bear with their attempt to convince us. Everything in the shape of personality we shall strive to avoid, together with every word of bitterness, remembering "that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

Let us say, further, in the way of introduction, that we do feel both happy and thankful at being constrained to dissent from the assertion (page 10), "that there never was a time when the Word of God seemed to have so little hold of the hearts and consciences of His people as the present." We record it as our conviction, and from an experience and remembrance of days now long past, not only that there is a greater breadth, but also a greater depth of godliness than existed in our younger days; and, still further, we rejoice in

the conviction that reverence for God and regard for God's Word have not had such place in the world for many hundred years as they have at this moment. It may be that iniquity abounds, but, it is also true, that there are more bearing witness for Christ, and trying to tread in His steps, than there have been for ages past. Such is our conviction, and, so believing, we give God thanks, and pray Him to revive His work more and more.

The number of sects or parties in the Church as presently existing is a subject of some strong remarks in the lecture, and also of lamentation and rebuke. We are at one with the Brethren in lamenting the divisions which exist in the Church of God, and, we trust, at one with them in praying for the time when the members of Christ shall see eye to eye.

*We*, however, are not prepared either to estimate the guiltiness, nor to say where it lies;—*we* are not prepared to say that we are *the people*, and that all who are outside of us are outside the House of God. The lecture does not in as many words say so of the Brethren, but, according to our reading, that seems to be the necessary conclusion. Now, if so small a section of *the Church* are right in their peculiar views, one of two conclusions must follow—either that the Scriptures, though given by God to be the rule of life to His people, are so obscure that, for these eighteen hundred years, not one in hundreds of the men whose lives bore witness for them that they were really following Christ in heart, and whose intelligence was never a matter of question, found the real meaning of that Book which was for many years the subject of their diligent and prayerful study; or, that the plainness and simplicity of the Scriptures, notwithstanding, such was the power of their prejudices, that they walked in spiritual bondage to their graves. We are not as yet prepared for either of these conclusions; and, whilst we will call no man on earth master, there have been men in all the sections of the professing

Church of Christ whose faith we desire to follow, "considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

But enough by way of introduction. We shall take up the subjects handled in the lecture in the order in which they lie; glad when we can agree with the author, and differing, when we do differ, in a spirit of love and of humility: for we bear our willing testimony to the Brethren, thus far at all events, that they do love our common Lord and Master, and are seeking to serve Him according to their light, and the ability which God has given them.

And now, following the lead of the lecture, the first subject of discussion which claims our attention is—

#### THE CHURCH.

Here, then, we are charged with being in great ignorance upon this subject, "thoroughly at sea about what the Church is." If the term, "the Church," is never used in Scripture but in *one* definite and limited meaning, then we shall have to confess that we have been in error. We have been accustomed to believe that in every place of Scripture where the term is used, it is so in such a way as *almost* necessarily to preclude mistake, and yet that it is employed as conveying a sense and meaning of a wider than a single application. The lecturer says, "Such a thing as death being in God's Church is thoroughly unknown to Scripture." Is that matter of fact? We know very well that there is a limited application of the term, which excludes the idea of a dead member, such as, perhaps (Acts xx. 28), "Feed the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood." (Ephesians v. 25-27; Colossians i. 18, etc.) I do not quote for brevity's sake—the passages can be easily turned to.

But then we have the Church spoken of as the Church in

this and that city, and the Church in this and that house—will it then be said that in regard to all these, it was the Church so pure, that there was not an unconverted person among them. It would be a very amiable charity to speak so, and of a very far wider compass than is exercised toward the Churches now, a limitation which we are sorry to have to admit even charity must make; but what ground of assurance have we that all these churches spoken of, were composed of living souls, and of none beside? In the church to which Gaius, to whom John wrote his Third Epistle, belonged, there was a Diotrephes who, because he loved to have the pre-eminence, would not receive even the Apostle, and whose deeds, “prating against us with malicious words,” the Apostle was to remember.

And then in the Church of Pergamos (but still expressly called a Church) there were “them that held the doctrine of Balaam,” and “them that held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.” Surely these do not look like converted persons, and yet they were in the Church of Pergamos, and called of it. We cannot cite every example that might be adduced without swelling our reply to inconvenient bulk. In our conscience we believe these examples are decisive. It may be said that they were detected as false brethren, and that if, being warned, they repented not, they were put out of the Church. Very likely, we reply, and very properly, and we just add that if any Church in our day detects false brethren in it, and does not deal in a way of faithful discipline with them, excluding them from the communion of the Church till they have manifested a credible repentance, then the Church is dealing unfaithfully by its Head, and by those who were once fellow-members, and who, by the fidelity of the Church to its function might be members yet again, and now, at least, if never before, true members.



What will our friends make of the incestuous member of the Church in Corinth? That was a Church—a Church of God, according to the dictum of the Apostle, and the incestuous person was clearly a member of it, else he could not be cut off from its membership, as was done in the exercise of godly discipline, and happily, through the grace of God, with a gracious result. There is no evidence that he was a converted person at the time of his sin—so far as there is evidence, it is all the other way, yet, in the judgment of the Apostle, *he was a member of the Church of God which was in Corinth.*

We confess ourselves utterly unable to comprehend what is gained by translating the Greek word into assembly in place of church in every case. No doubt the word is used in the Scriptures a very few times wherein the term assembly would be the preferable word; but the cases are still far more numerous where the rendering would be weak and apt to obscure rather than elucidate the real meaning,—for even the Brethren themselves acknowledge that there is an assembly which is entitled to a designation which no other assembly on earth can claim, even the designation of “the Church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” To us it appears as plain as anything can well be, that every person making a credible profession of the faith was recognised as a member of the church of the place of his residence, and with God alone it was left to decide who were and who were not members of the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.

We acknowledge to have been particularly struck—taken by complete surprise—when we read in the lecture, “The Church then did not exist before Pentecost;” and, in order that it may be the more emphatic, it is printed in capitals. Indeed, it is a discovery worthy of this distinction, for we are persuaded that not one in ten thousand of the readers of

Scripture would have ever discovered for themselves this astounding piece of news. In our ignorance we had believed with innumerable of the intelligent professing Christian community of all ages that God had a Church in the world from the very beginning of time, that Adam, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob were members of it, and that the angel who accompanied the exodus from Egypt was, not merely in an assembly of men, but in the Church in the wilderness, guiding the Church to its place appointed for it by God in the world, that it might be a light shining in a dark world till the Day-Star should arise, and the light of the world be revealed in the Son of Man.

In the same paragraph, the lecture says—and speaking, too, of the Church as now existing after Pentecost—“the apostles and the prophets are the foundation.” But how prophets could be, even in part, the foundation of a Church of which they themselves formed no part is rather puzzling. As, however, the puzzle is not ours, we are not concerned to find a solution—to us, the thing seems simply a plain contradiction in terms, and there we leave it.

Again, something of the same contradictory character meets us where it is said in the lecture, still speaking of the Church, “it has the saints in it, but it is in ruin;” but, if it has the saints in it, all the saints, and nothing but saints, how can it be a ruin? Small it might be, but, as far as it went, it would be the most precious and best thing on earth, and surely something very different from a ruin. Again, we say, we are not called to reconcile the contradiction as it is not ours.

We are not disposed to say much on the tacit comparison of the Brethren with Elijah. It is said “the Brethren boast of nothing.” Perhaps not—they will therefore all the more *bear with us* when we remind them that even Elijah was in a mistake when he thought that he only was left. In place of

*one* true worshipper of God, which was all that the prophet knew of, God Himself knew of seven thousand ; and, if there are as many in proportion outside the pale of the Brethren's communion now in these our days, we can afford to *bear with them*, in what certainly seems to us to be as near an approach to boasting as is consistent with an avoidance of express terms.

We think there is something worse, however, than even boasting in such language as the following :—“Take the Wesleyans—what a more perfect worldly system could be imagined ; and there is no fear of its influence being lessened. It will wax worse and worse. So every sect—they will all develop for judgment. So says the Word of God.” Now, anything more daringly uncharitable than this we are unable to conceive, and to force the Word of God into communion with such an exhibition does savour to us of daring profanity. We are not the advocates of Methodism, and the Methodists need no advocacy of ours. Their zeal for, and fidelity to Christ has received the seal of an approbation which can make them afford to dispense with that of all men. Well will it be for the Brethren, if, in the great day of the Lord, they shall have as many seals of a faithful ministry in the Lord as *our* Methodist brethren. Let us hope that the above language was that of inadvertence, and that it will be repented of before God.

The lecturer says, “the Lord will ere long vindicate his own Elijahs.” We reply, He will assuredly. Be it so, “Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus.” But it may be that there are some now saying—“Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou,” “the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these,” who may then learn more deeply than they have learned yet that “the greatest of all gifts is charity.”

We have done with what we shall say as to the Church.

We have studied brevity, and wish still to do so. But we think we have made good our point that the Church of God on earth is composed, and that, too, according to His will, of all who make a credible profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the fact of who are, and who are not converted persons being known to God alone, as He alone can search the heart. While, on the other hand, we know that the Church of the first-born, though not immaculate while it remains on earth, is composed solely of converted men, who will one day be all of them presented before God without spot or blemish.

But we proceed now to speak, not so much of ministry, as the lecture calls it, but rather of

#### THE MINISTRY—

A term of which we make use without scruple in imitation of Scripture (2nd Cor. vi. 3), “giving no offence in anything, that *the ministry* be not blamed”—the ministry as distinguished from the general membership of the Church. We shall endeavour to avoid mixing the idea of priesthood with that of ministry, as we are accused of having done in the tract which is under the review of the lecturer. We are quite unconscious of having done this, and it would have been unpardonable negligence had we done so,—for it is a long time now since we learned that there was no priest on earth, and but one in the whole universe of God, “the man Christ Jesus.”

But all this is really very little to the purpose, and about as little is a large part of what the lecturer says on the subject. We are all agreed on the facts that a ministry in the Church is of Divine appointment; that conversion is a necessary qualification in every true minister of the sanctuary, and, not only so, but gifts competent for teaching—two qualifications which are purely the gifts of the Holy Ghost; and, further, that a duly-qualified ministry is the gift of

Christ to His Church. We do not attempt a proof of these propositions, they are all but self-evident, and, at any rate, there is thus far no difference betwixt us and the Brethren.

In the lecture (page 23) there is a note on the Scriptural quotation, "He gave gifts unto men," as follows, viz. :— "Note, unto men, not unto the Church. The men are set in the Church, but men and not the Church are responsible for the godly exercise of the gifts to them committed. This is deeply important. Think, then, of such gifts awaiting men's appointment, ordination, sanction, etc. Think of such gifts being panders to men," etc. The logical conclusion of all which seems to be just this, that every man *who thinks* that he has got the gift is forthwith to become a preacher or teacher to all or any who will receive him in that character. Is such a course as this doing all things decently and in order? We must be pardoned for saying we think not, and that its inevitable tendency is to lead to an overweening self-confidence in the individual, and to confusion and disorganisation in the Church. We allow the gifts to be from God, but men are to "try the spirits."

To follow the whole line of remark (for we cannot in conscience call it argument) would swell what we intend to be little more than a tract into a big book, which would just be a great evil. Much of the lecturer's remarks has not a particle of bearing on the question depending between us, and we shall, therefore, confine ourselves to that question. *The question really is, Is a bishop, presbyter, or elder—for they all signify the same office—so completely and so manifestly God-appointed that the people have nothing to do in the matter but to submit? and, further, Is it or is it not the ordinance of God that the pastors of His Church should be men separated from the world to the one great work of the Gospel of Christ, and, being thus dependent for temporal maintenance, are entitled to look for it at the hands of those*

to whom they minister? We believe that these two propositions do really exhaust the question at issue, and, overlooking all irrelevant matter, we shall address ourselves to them alone.

And, here, we give up Queen-appointed and patron-appointed ministries to the tender mercies of the lecturer. He cannot think worse of these modes of appointment than we do; but we cannot so easily give up the voice of the people in the choice and appointment of the man who is to break the Bread of Life to them. Of course, we are all at one in regard to apostles and prophets, and the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, as no longer existent in the Church, the need having passed away, the gifts have been withdrawn; but we maintain that the need for pastors and teachers—men set apart for the work of the ministry, and relieved from all other work that they may give themselves to that alone—is as great as ever. Of course, we will not be held as thinking that, in the case of poor congregations, unable adequately to maintain their minister, there is anything derogatory to his character in imitating the apostles and teachers of the early Church, and working with his hands. We hold the very reverse, and honour such men with all our heart, but we, at the same time, hold that if the Church could set them free from this necessity, it would find its interest in so doing.

Read 1st Corinthians ix. 13, 14, and you find the claim of the ministry to an adequate support as clearly expressed as words can make it; and, to our mind, this would seem to carry by no strained inference separation to the work for which provision was thus made. But what share had the people in this matter? We have already conceded, what so far as we know no man has ever denied, that a true minister of the Gospel is God-furnished and God-appointed; still, we maintain that this appointment of God is, since miracles ceased, through the voice or suffrages of the congregation or

church (for, in very many instances, the term is in Scripture applied to a mere congregation of the Church).

Again, turn to Acts vi. 3, and you find, as plainly as words can make anything, that to the members of the Church was the choice of deacons committed, and yet they were to be "men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." How does this correspond with the note of the lecturer, already referred to, viz., "Think of such gifts awaiting men's appointment, ordination, sanction"? And yet the direction of the *twelve* Apostles is, to "the multitude of the disciples." Will the Brethren affirm that this was a mistake, a solecism on the part of the Apostles in the management of the Church? or, will they say it was only deacons who were thus chosen? But we reply they were to be men full of the Holy Ghost, and such men were fit for any office in the Church.

The lecturer tells us that, when (Acts xiii.) the certain prophets and teachers there named "fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul," they merely expressed their sympathy with the Holy Ghost in His call for the separation of these two unto the work to which He had called them. This is a mere *ipse dixit* of the lecturer, and we are just as well entitled to maintain, on the other hand, that it was an ordination by the office-bearers of the Church of these two brethren to the Holy Ghost's calling,—nay, better entitled, for the imposition of hands, as we shall shortly see, was something far more solemn and important than an expression of sympathy which was competent to any man.

When Paul exhorts Timothy (1st Tim. iv. 14) not to neglect the gift that was in him, "which was given thee by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery," was that laying on of hands also a mere expression of sympathy? We apprehend there are very few who will think so. And who were the presbytery? Were they the whole Church

in the entirety of its members, or a particular portion of the Church known as presbyters? We cannot think that, in any ordinary mode of interpreting words, any but the latter conclusion can be arrived at. And, again, when he bids Timothy (1st Tim. v. 22) "lay hands suddenly on no man," was that simply an injunction not to be too ready to sympathise with any man? And that, too, even when regarded in connection with verse 17—"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." No doubt the laying on of hands meant something more than sympathy, and was a symbolical act, in which the Church concurred with the Church's Head in setting apart, for a peculiar work, men designated by their gifts of the Holy Ghost as fit and proper for so high and noble a calling.

The Epistle to the Philippians bears this inscription—"to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons"—that is, as we understand it, to the Church with its office-bearers. Granted, it may be said, but were these officials paid labourers, and who appointed them? In regard to the payment we have only to say that, by the dictum of the same Apostle, they were entitled to claim it, and, if by reason of a patrimony of their own they did not, that could never form an argument for annulling the maxim, which is recognised both by Scripture and common sense, that "the labourer is worthy of his hire." The Apostle himself, while claiming for himself and Barnabas the power to demand, as a matter of right, maintenance, on account of their labours, declares that they had forbore to use the power, "lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ." And this, Christian expediency well warranted him in doing, looking at the peculiar circumstances of the Church at Corinth at that time: divisions had crept in amongst the members, they were divided into parties, and called themselves by the names



of men in place of by the one name, Christ. Yet, while he refused to take anything from the Church at Corinth, he did not scruple to take the free-will offerings of other Churches where no such spirit of strife and debate existed; and, in regard to this very matter of the maintenance, expostulating with this same Church, he says, in his Second Epistle to it (chap. xii. 13)—“What is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you: forgive me this wrong.” There are two views that may be taken of the expression, “forgive me this wrong.” The one, as being ironical—as if he had said, So great was my affection toward you, that I forbore my just right, to take away occasion from any saying that it was yours we sought and not you. Is that a wrong? Forgive it: the acting and testimony of love should be easily excusable; or, the meaning may be—and it is more probably the true one—it is the privilege as well as the duty of God’s people to bestow of their carnal things upon those who come to them sowing spiritual things; and “even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel,” forgive me the wrong of depriving you of the opportunity of enjoying this privilege, of exercising this duty.

And it may not be far out of place to remark here, in regard to Church membership, or purity of communion, that, whilst we presume it will be admitted that the Apostle was anxious to maintain this to the very utmost extent to which it was competent for man to carry it, even he, far more largely endowed with the Spirit than believing men or Christian ministers in after ages, was obliged to admit, and to do it without casting any reproach on the office-bearers whose duty it was to judge of the meetness of those who sought admittance to Church fellowship, as if they had been guilty of dereliction, or remissness in their duty; that, in the Church at Corinth, while there may have been but one in-

cestuous member, there might be many over whom he would have to bewail as having sinned already, and had not even repented "of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they had committed." We speak with all humility when we say that, with every disposition to maintain as solemn duty purity of Church membership, the securing of this is competent to no official supervision which has ever yet existed in the Church, and that a wise exercise of the judgment of charity will never be imputed by the Head of the Church to His office-bearers as sin.

And now, in regard to the appointment of the office-bearers, with whom did it lie? There is not very much said in Scripture upon this subject, and, we presume, there can be little doubt that, so long as apostles and men endowed with supernatural gifts remained in the Church, many office-bearers may have been appointed directly by them; and if the Scriptures had contained nothing clear and definite on the subject, we should have been driven to fall back on first principles; and even so, as we think, in the absence of any infallible directory, we would naturally have concluded that the voice of the Church—that is, of its members in full communion—should carry the decision of who was the man best qualified to edify the body of Christ. And, in point of fact, what is said in Scripture coincides with what, as we think, is the dictate of natural reason.

In the lecture (page 25) it is said, "in the case of Matthias, who was numbered among the Apostles, people say the Apostles appointed him. Nothing of the kind. The eleven cast lots, and the lot fell upon him, etc." Let any man read the whole passage, and we shall greatly wonder if he does not come to the conclusion that the act there narrated, being the filling up of one of the most important offices in the Church, was the act of *all* the disciples, in number about one hundred and twenty. It is true the lot was an appeal to

God, and in so far the election may be said to have been directly His. But, observe, only two were subjected to the lot. And who chose them? Evidently the disciples. It may be said that, perhaps, there were only two having the necessary qualifications. The narrative does not read, however, as if there were only two, for it is said "they appointed two," and that looks as if there had been others.

In Acts xiv. 23 we are informed that Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every church. Biblical critics (and we acknowledge freely our incapacity in this respect)—men of recognised ability, and whose prepossessions should not from their position lie in that direction—say, that the true meaning of the word, rendered ordain, means "to elect by a show of hands;" and, if so, we have the popular element very distinctly recognised, while, on the other hand, if it means ordain, setting apart for a particular purpose, it seems to us equally to militate against the position assumed by the Brethren. In the lecture (page 29), we are told "the appointment of elder and deacon was strictly apostolic, and, hence, there is no Scriptural authority to-day for their appointment, although, if persons answering to them exist, *they* may be *owned*." Now, what others may think of this we know not. It is not an example of begging the question merely—that is nothing uncommon among controversialists—but it is the only example we can remember of, in the same breath, begging the question and repudiating it. If the Brethren understand their own doctrine it is well, for not many outsiders are competent to such intellectual gladiatorship.

In conclusion on this part of the subject, we *think* we have made good our position, and we shall, therefore, only further add that we regard the state of matters among the Brethren as the most lawless organisation conceivable—if organisation that body can be said to possess where there is no governing

or ordering power, unless what may be self-assumed on the one hand, and tacitly submitted to on the other, but only so long as submission involves neither sacrifice nor restraint; and yet governments are distinctly recognised by the Apostle (1st Cor. xii. 28) as set in the Church by God, and forming part of His ordinance for the well-being of the body of Christ.

The third topic treated in the lecture is

#### LAW.

The lecturer says, "this is a large subject, and it would take me two or three lectures to exhaust it;" we say, very true—two or three of the longest lectures that were ever delivered to *exhaust* it. We have an idea that the subject has never been exhausted yet, and if the lecturer shall address his mind in earnest to the subject, we believe that he will find it farther-reaching and longer-enduring than so far as appears he has yet conceived—that it began with creature existence, and can never have an end so long as the relations of Creator and creature shall endure.

There seems to be a great shrinking from the term *law* in the lecture—an avoidance of the very term when it can be got rid of. For example—"What does the Lord Jesus tell me in the "Sermon on the Mount"? He puts two sets of *things* in contrast—the one spoken by Moses, the other by Himself." Well, but if Christ's "Sermon on the Mount" was not law, at least the tables brought down by Moses from Sinai were law—pure law. Discerning, we trust, in some measure, the superiority of the precepts of Christ over those of Moses, we should hesitate to say that the one law was a contrast to the other. We cannot forget that both laws had one Author, and He, being the perfect Lawgiver, is never in contrast (that is, in opposition) to Himself. The Lord gave by Moses precepts accommodated to time and circumstance, rather than

to the perfection of duty. Not a little was suffered by reason of their peculiar circumstances, and even by reason of the hardness of their hearts, which, in better times and in clearer light, the Lord would not suffer. The Mosaic law of divorce is an example in point; but the "Sermon on the Mount," instead of abrogating the law, spiritualised it, and, in spiritualising, gave it a wider sweep and a deeper emphasis than it ever before possessed. The ceremonial law is no doubt abrogated, its purpose was served, its end accomplished; and so, as it made nothing perfect, it was made to give way to the bringing in of the better hope by which we now draw nearer to God, than could the worshippers under that law. Yet Paul speaks of himself as "being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." He does not appear to have understood that the Gospel had abolished law; and the Apostle James speaks of "the perfect law of liberty," which whoso continueth therein is a doer of the work, and shall be blessed in his deed.

If we apprehend aright the teaching of the Brethren in this matter of law, it is that such is the power of love in the new man—the man anew created in the image of Christ—that the obligations of law disappear, and are swallowed up in the freedom and delight of serving the Lord—that service being the service of love and freedom—not of law. And we are ready thankfully to acknowledge that there is much of truth in all this, but there is not all the truth. The obedience of the Christian is mainly that of love, else it is worthless, but it is, and at the same time, the obedience of duty, too. Indeed, you cannot disjoin the idea of obedience from the idea of law, they are correlative terms,—the one ever implying the other. And what is gained by denying the law to be a *rule* of life while yet the precepts of that law are honoured by obedience, and while it is confessed that a breach of them would be sin, we cannot conceive. Love

ought to be the most powerful spring of obedience on earth, as it assuredly will be in heaven ; but subjection to a law-giver, and loyal fealty to a king, the Supreme Ruler, must, and, we believe, for ever will mingle with the loving obedience of heaven itself. Remember what the angel said to Daniel—" At the beginning of thy supplications, the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee." No doubt it was an errand of love to the angel, and he was a willing messenger, but none the less was he fulfilling duty, obeying commandment, and, in the very act, confessing the supremacy of the will of another.

There is only one Absolute Being—only one who, by the perfection of His nature, is His own sole law—only one who, being essentially holy, absolutely cannot do wrong ; " the just God cannot do iniquity," but of Him alone can this be said. And where there is a liability to err, as angels have erred and also men, there must be law as the rule and guide of the life. It is no answer to say that angels and redeemed men in heaven will never sin, but be perfectly holy ; this we grant, with all thankfulness to Him by whose grace they will be established unblamable in His sight for ever ; but it must never be forgotten that it is by Him they are established, and that *their* perfection in holiness is only creature perfection after all. And who can tell how much or how little law may have to do with their establishment ?

The Brethren seem to decline to recognise the distinction so generally recognised by theologians of almost every name, namely, that between the law as a covenant of works, or source of justifying righteousness, and the law as a rule of life even to the believer, or the law as a code of duty, and of imperative obligation to all men. Of course, in the first view of it, we are at one with them, and gladly recognise our freedom from it, through our death to the law by our death in and with Christ ; but it is to the law as a covenant of works

that we are thus dead. We maintain that, as a rule of life, it still binds. And does not the Apostle Paul say the same thing? In the very epistle in which he maintains the believer's death to sin, we find him saying, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." This man does not seem to have been so dead to law and sin as to have no further connection with them; nor yet, again, when we hear him saying, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect;" and, again, the oft-quoted, but never-refuted, passage from John, written in his old age, "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

It is very evident to us that the Brethren attach a very different meaning to the phrase "dead to sin," than what the Apostles did; and, if their language fitly embodies their experience, theirs is a very different experience from that of the great bulk of professing Christians now, and also from that of the Apostles themselves. The lecturer says, "If I have got the mind of Christ, if I have got the nature of Him with whom I am identified, I will scorn to do what the law condemns." We do not think this is very fitting or very becoming language from the lips of a frail man. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;" "Let not him that putteth on his harness boast as he that taketh it off." A little more humility of mind, a little more self-distrust would not misbecome even the Brethren, and might be advantageous to their steadfastness in grace.

The illustration given in the lecture (page 37) about attendance at the University is at once inconclusive in regard to the design of its introduction, and is peculiarly obnoxious to the charge of an overweening self-righteousness. Because he can attend many more lectures than the University re-

quires, and thereby, for himself at least, elevate the standard of University teaching, does it therefore follow that he can elevate the standard of the law of God? Because he can, in some cases, exceed the requirements of men, can he, in any case, exceed those of God? If not, the illustration is inapt, and, to say the very least, misleading. That we have not placed a very wrong meaning upon the above illustration, read the lecturer's own application—"Those who are one with Christ, and love Him, have got a much higher standard than 'thou shalt,' or 'thou shalt not,'" which, put into plain language, just means a higher standard than the law of God. A humble believer is content to hate sin, to watch and pray against it, he has not yet, at least, reached the high elevation of being able to "scorn" to disobey. He is content to confess with Paul that, often when he would do good, evil is present with him, and to thank God for his *prospective eventual* deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The long quotation from J. N. Darby appears to us far more difficult of understanding, far more self-contradictory, and fully more contradictory of Scripture than the lecture itself. We acknowledge to be unable to take any consistent meaning out of it; to us, it seems to blow hot and cold with the same breath, and to maintain at once freedom from law and subjection to law. All this, we may be told, arises from our ignorance of the Gospel, because we have not yet escaped from the house of bondage, but are still grinding in the prison-house. Be it so, in the judgment of the Brethren, we shall be well content to be able to say with Paul, "Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ;" "Not he who commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."

We have confessed our inability to make anything like consistent sense of the long quotation referred to, and, therefore, it may contain Gospel truth for anything we know, and



it may carry sense and Gospel, too, to the initiated. We shall not attempt to answer till we are able to extract the meaning, and, with this confession of ignorance, we leave the subject of law, and turn to that which is next in order in the lecture.

#### THE SABBATH AND THE LORD'S DAY.

And here, as we concluded our last section with a confession of our ignorance of what the teaching of J. N. Darby is, so we have now, with equal humility, to submit to the charge of ignorance brought against us in respect of the subject of this section. But, first, let us advert to the fact that, having learned that the term "Plymouth" was offensive to the Brethren, we have frankly withdrawn it. No man should be forced to bear a name or designation which he disavows. It was used by us in no offensive sense, and we frankly and honestly withdraw it. At the same time, in using their own designation of Brethren, we must deny any peculiar right which they may think they have to it, as, in regard to all believing men—all real Christians—we say with Paul, "One is your Master, even Christ, and *all ye* are brethren."

The lecturer says, "Once they (*i.e.*, sects or parties) had no existence, in fact, were unknown in Britain 300 years ago." Now, we doubt this very much—if it is true, it is only because the so-called Church of Rome reigned triumphant; but, even in that outwardly compact and seemingly homogeneous system of spiritual despotism and death, thank God, there were sects and there was life. We must not be understood as thanking God for sects, but for sects because there was life in them in the midst of surrounding spiritual death. In this world, where the spiritual vision is imperfect in all, and where we wait the light of a clearer and better day, we think that to human wisdom they are unavoidable, and whilst we pray for the time when men shall see eye to eye,

duty now consists in Christian charity—in seeing and acknowledging all the good which is exemplified by our brother in Christ, and in bearing and forbearing with him, as we wish him to bear and forbear with us.

We will frankly confess our ignorance, if ignorance it be, in holding that the “Sabbath,” and “The Lord’s Day,” are synonymous terms. We do not, however, mean to confess an ignorance of which we are not guilty. We still hold that the old Sabbath, which was from the very beginning of man’s existence, and the new Lord’s Day, are one and the same institution, having the same design in the purpose of God, and the same effect in the experience of man in all the ages, so often and so long as man enters into the spirit of the institution. That it is a commemorative ordinance (though not that alone), is very manifest: it is commemorative of creation, a truth to which the wisest and best of the heathen philosophers never reached, an event in which all men are alike interested and always, and therefore, likely even on that ground, alone to be of perpetual obligation. We know very well that the Lord attached the commemoration of the deliverance from Egypt, to the observance of the Sabbath, at least among the Jews—and we think the event was worthy of being so honoured, by a people delivered from a state of abject slavery, and exalted to the first place among the nations of the earth—and if we are entitled to regard God’s dealings with Israel as largely typical of His dealing with the Church, when it has become not the Church of one nation, but of all nations, we shall not, even now, when the Sabbath has become commemorative of an event excelling in glory and importance all that went before, regard the lesser deliverance as unworthy of a part in our Sabbath remembrances, and in our Sabbath thanksgivings.

And now, when by reason of the excelling glory and superlative importance of the event, which takes, and ever

will take the first place in Sabbath memories and in Sabbath celebrations, the day has been changed upon the sufficient ground of apostolic example, ratified and confirmed, as we believe, by the Lord Himself, while He abode on earth after His resurrection from the dead, it is still the self-same Institution, involving from first to last the great design of "Glory to God in the highest," and subsidiary to that, "good will to men."

The lecturer, after noticing that the Lord, after the six days' work, rested on the seventh day and sanctified it, observes, "Please to note that it was God's rest and not man's." But why did He rest? Not, as the lecturer fully admits, because He needed repose, but why then? Because, as He seems to us, and has seemed to innumerable before us, He would, by His own example, give force to His own precept, and send down the obligation of the Sabbath through the ages, by such a sanction as must tell with irresistible power on every heart not callous to the claims of infinite wisdom and unbounded goodness. And all experience confirms both the wisdom and goodness of the appointment: the happy experience of God's people in the enjoyments of their Sabbaths as their best days, and the melancholy experience of multitudes of evil-doers, who have had to confess that their Sabbath desecration was the outset of their career to prison and to untimely death.

Again, we read in the lecture, "As a matter of fact, it was all rest at first to Adam—in the Garden of Eden he had nothing to do but rest;" and, immediately after, we read, "The keeping of the garden was not hard work." Most true, we say, but it was work, and therefore not all rest; it was not labour as implying painful toil, and travail such as that which sin entailed upon him, but work—a faint image of God's work—"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;" or such as that in which angels, ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, are now engaged; or such as the redeemed

will be employed in for ever. And because it was work, and not all rest, then a Sabbath of real rest was, if not a necessity, a grateful relaxation,—affording at the same time a season and opportunity for a steadier and closer fellowship with his Maker. Such a Sabbath would not be incongruous in heaven itself. May the lecturer and I be there, seeing eye to eye, and bearing part in the blessed service whatsoever its nature and whatsoever its occasions.

In the lecture we are told “God gave the Sabbath to Israel after the exodus.” This is quietly assuming almost the whole question. We deny that God gave the Sabbath after the exodus. It is very possible, nay perhaps, very probable, that during the latter period of the sojourn in Egypt, and when the people groaned under the bondage, the iron of which entered into their very souls there was but little of rest of any kind, and still less of the Sabbath rest. But the renewing of the commandment speaks a very different language from that of giving: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” The injunction looks backward to a previous institution, and forward to an unlimited observance. The complaint of God by His prophets against His people for their violation of His Sabbath, reveals plainly the place which it held in His regards, and its importance to the people of His choice.

The illustration (page 44 of the lecture) does not in the very least affect our views of the Sabbath, or of its proper observance. Recognising and honouring the propriety of our Lord’s acting, we, following His example, have no hesitation in admitting or doing works of *necessity and mercy* of whatever kind, as works which neither break the Sabbath rest, nor infringe in the very slightest degree on its spirit. If there are any Pharisees among us, who would have made common cause with the Pharisees of our Lord’s days, we give them up to the condemnation of whoso will take the obligation upon them; we are content to say Amen

to the Lord's judgment of them. Pharasaical observance of the letter is one thing, devout observance of the ordinance in spirit and in truth is a very different thing. We cannot help expressing profound astonishment at the interpretation given to our Lord's declaration that "the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath," that interpretation being, "that He would withdraw that which He had given as a sign between Him and His people, and which the people had broken down in : " and then, by way of fixing the interpretation as true beyond all further argument, is adduced the fact that the Lord was in the tomb on the then existing Sabbath-day. We will not attempt to reason upon this argument, because it is so entirely a begging of the question as almost to set argument at defiance. We shall content ourselves with simply stating our view of the matter (not singular, certainly) and leaving to every one to choose on what side he believes the truth to lie.

We shall admit that the Lord's words may appear to imply a power had He so chosen to abrogate the Sabbath, though we should very much hesitate to admit that such an idea was intended to be conveyed by Him who always frankly avowed Himself the servant of the Father, in respect of an observance of His Father's appointment. But we believe He claimed, in virtue of His Father having put all things under His hand, to modify the observance, and the period of its return, and the sanctions by which the observance of the Sabbath had been heretofore maintained. We would not like to say that, by His merely lying in the tomb on the Jewish Sabbath, He thereby abrogated it: let that argument stand for what it is worth. We think the change of the day can be argued on higher and firmer ground. If any day deserved to be set apart for peculiar honour—if any day deserved above all others to have a mark set upon it for perpetual remembrance, it was the day when the Lord by His resurrection from the dead brought in

perfectly the better hope, manifested the truth that He had abolished death and brought life and immortality to light—the annals of time will never know a greater day till the Lord come again, and, in heaven itself, it will be acknowledged to be worthy of a never-ending celebration. The Lord Himself honoured it by His renewed manifestation of Himself to His people on it; the Holy Ghost honoured it by the Apocalyptic vision to John in the Spirit on the Lord's day; and the Church honoured it by its stated breaking of bread on that day, an example which, we believe, we would do well to imitate much more frequently than we do. We admit that we think the Brethren act more scripturally in this matter than the Presbyterian Churches. We should be truly glad to see a movement in that direction.

There is a deal of what is said on this subject in the lecture, and in the quotations introduced into it, calculated (we do not say intended, for we do not believe it was intended) to mislead. A great effort is made to maintain a distinction between the Sabbath and the Lord's day, as if they were totally distinct institutions; not as between the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sabbath, but the Sabbath generally and the Lord's day. This distinction, of course, we do not admit, believing the institution to be one in spirit and design from the beginning of the ages to the end. We have no doubt but that for a time, specially by believing Jews, the seventh-day and first-day Sabbath were both observed, just as the temple service was not at once forsaken (probably not till the destruction of Jerusalem, when it could be observed no longer) by the Jewish believers. Yet, even then, the old economy had so decayed, and had waxed so old, that it was ready to vanish away; and at length it did vanish, new moons, Sabbaths, and all. But, after all, there would be little ground for dispute betwixt us and the Brethren if it was a mere question of names, while we were substantially

agreed upon the thing ; and there is a considerable appearance of agreement in regard to the thing itself, as when, for instance, it is said, "So the Lord's day is not a common day, but one specially set apart ;" but the difference breaks out immediately, when it is added, "not as a command, but as the expression of the highest privilege, for the worship of the Lord." To us these words convey the idea of the Sabbath (or Lord's day) simply adopted by man as privilege, while we hold that it is at once commanded duty and blessed privilege. True it is, no doubt, that, where it is esteemed as privilege, the day will be regarded even where duty does not enter into the idea of its observance. But what of those who regard it as no privilege, but feel toward it and say of it as many of the Jews of old, "What a weariness is it?" Shall those who thus regard it in our day be held less guilty than were the Jews? It would appear as if it must be so—if the one were guilty of a breach of duty, and the other not. We should regard the prevalence of such a belief in our land as one of the greatest evils which could befall it.

Again, we read in the lecture (page 48), "In spirit the Christian is risen, and every day belongs to the Lord." This, we presume, no one will dispute, but it goes on to add, "therefore is he to bring up the standard of each day that follows in the week to that blessed beginning, the Lord's day." Now, while admitting the duty of the consecration of the whole man—body, soul, and spirit—to the Lord, is it possible for men, regarded either in the light of their position in Providence, or in the light of their as yet imperfect sanctification, thus to bring every day to the standard of a day of peculiar consecration—a day, as we believe, specially challenged by the Lord for Himself? Let us frankly say, we believe not. And, in regard to the very instance which is so indignantly denied in the lecture, of the woman having recourse to the washing-tub on the Lord's day, who does not

see that, if every day must be brought to the standard of the Lord's day, and, as cleanliness is a virtue of almost absolute necessity, the duty had to be done some day, and if of right it must not be done on the Lord's day, because of its unsuitableness to the duties of the day, then, the Brethren themselves, being judges, every day *cannot* be brought to the standard of the Lord's day. And here we shall leave the matter—"let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

The next subject treated is

#### SANCTIFICATION.

We are challenged in the lecture for not telling what sanctification is. We really did not think it necessary, but we shall now supply the defect. We believe, then, in few words (and we rather expect the Brethren will agree with us here) that it is "the renewal of the *whole man* after the image of Christ;" and, as we expect the Brethren to agree thus far with us, so we agree with them to this extent, that it is from Christ—or, as we would prefer expressing it—in and through Christ, immediately from the Spirit of Christ, that we have our sanctification. But we still persist in our belief that we have not our sanctification from Christ in the same manner, nor so long as we are in the world to the same degree, as our justification. The one is the direct result of Christ's justifying righteousness, inclusive of His atoning death—is the work simply and solely of Christ Himself, without any co-operation on our part, unless believing be called co-operation (though faith itself be the gift of God),—such a co-operation as the beggar has with his benefactor, when he holds forth his hand for the freely-offered alms,—and is complete from its very first inception, insomuch that the very weakest believer is as much justified as the strongest—the believer of yesterday as much justified as the believer entitled to the honourable appellation of an old disciple.



Now, can all this be said of sanctification? Because, if not, then the language which we used in the "Counsels" is justified. But, in the lecture, we are informed (page 52) that the moment the sinner goes to God, and accepts His proffered gift of Christ, he gets all "that God can be pleased with." Now, we admit the truth of this: the only matter in dispute between us is, how he gets and when he gets his completeness in Christ. Whether he gets all at once, and, in its utmost perfection, all that he needs to make him perfect in Christ Jesus; or whether, in respect of some of the graces of the Divine life, they are gradually bestowed like growth in the natural body. We hold that this latter is the case in the matter of sanctification, if not in all the graces of the new life in Christ, justification alone excepted. "Grow in grace" is a Scriptural injunction, but you will search in vain in the Scriptures for an injunction to grow in justification. Believers do grow in holiness and in knowledge, but their justification does not grow: in respect of that, they at once stand perfect in the liberty from condemnation wherewith Christ hath made them free. It is simply misleading for a man to think, that, because he has his sanctification in and through Christ alone, therefore, he must have it as a complete and perfect gift from the very first moment of its bestowal as a grace. No doubt, it might have been so, had God so chosen, but the very fact that he has not so chosen leads us to the conclusion that it is wise on God's part, and well for us on ours, that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven;" not outward tribulation only, but after fightings within as well as without.

We can conceive the idea of an imperfect but progressive sanctification, but not of an imperfect and progressive justification. A man—every man—must be either in a state of favour with God, or of alienation. No man can conceive of himself as partly in the one state and partly in the other;

but we can readily conceive of a man in a state of favour with God, bearing as yet only in part the lineaments of the Divine likeness, yet having in him such a divinely-implanted principle of growth, that the perfect image is as sure of being ultimately formed as Divine grace and Divine power can make anything sure.

Let men form to themselves what theories they will as to the doctrine of perfection, if they are honest with themselves they will have to confess that the law in the members, which made him who was the equal of the very chiefest of the Apostles groan within himself, is not yet dead within them. But here, if anywhere, it looks as if it were dissenting about words; for, in the lecture (pages 52, 53), we are told that, if the penitent thief had lived, there would have been room for progress in holiness; and, again, we are told, that, as believers see more and more "what it is to be set apart" from worldly things, "they give them up"—in short, we have here the doctrine of a progressive sanctification. And this is all that we have been contending for! No one doubts the sureness of the believer's ultimate sanctification, and as little that it is a fruit of Christ's atoning work. Why, then, use language that is calculated to mislead—language in one part that is contradictory of words in another part. Our doctrine, as we humbly think, is both consistent with Scripture and consistent with itself; as we believe it is "the form of sound words," taught in the Scriptures, and held and taught by all the evangelical sections of the Church of Christ—sections, indeed, and the more is the pity, yet, after all, sections of the Church of Christ.

There follows a long quotation from another of the Brethren, in explanation of the doctrine as held by them, but it is neither more explanatory, nor less self-contradictory, than the lecture itself; indeed, we frankly confess, we would rather listen to the lecturer himself, than to

any of the co-adjutors whom he has called in to his help.  
The concluding topic in the lecture is

#### CONFESSION OF SIN.

We shall not scruple to acknowledge or confess, that, in respect of the duty of confession of sin, we have, in the "Counsels" spoken unadvisedly, and have, therefore, so far spoken amiss. We took, too readily, upon trust what is told by others. In a catechism (of which the sixth edition is before us, and to which we had heard of no reply), it is affirmed (page 15) that the Brethren do deny the need of confession, on the ground that they have no sins to confess. In the face of the lecture, of the declaration there made, and of what is said in the long quotation introduced into the lecture, we would hold it to be unfair to affirm, without qualification, that the Brethren deny the need of confession. And yet, let any one outside the Brethren read this part of the lecture, and he will feel that the confession there avowed and eulogised is not the confession to which he is accustomed, nor very like the confession to which we are habituated in the Word of God. But, then, it appears that the great point of difference between us, and that portion of the Brethren whose sentiments are spoken by the lecturer (for we are informed, truly or untruly, we cannot say, that there are sects even among the Brethren), is the object or end for which God requires confession at our hand, and for which we make it.

We believe that we are not misrepresenting the sentiments in the lecture when we say that the object for which confession is there represented to be made, is in no view at all toward forgiveness, but purely for a renewal of communion with God interrupted by sin. The only ground on which such a limited view of the object and effect of confession can be held is, that the moment a sinner believes in Christ, not

only are all his past sins forgiven, but he is further already forgiven, by anticipation, all the sins he will ever commit. Now, we admit that there is provision made in the covenant of grace for the forgiveness of all the sins past, present, and future of all believers, but it is a very different thing to say that past sin actually committed, and future guilt not yet incurred, are both alike, and already forgiven. The difference between the two views may seem unimportant, but there is all the importance which can be attached to the fact that the one is Scriptural and the other is not. And how much more readily the one may be turned into a doctrine of licentiousness than the other, is obvious on the slightest consideration. We do not say, we do not think that their doctrine is so abused by the Brethren. We do not for a moment believe so; but that does not invalidate the evident fact that such is its tendency. For, as some men's practice is better than their creed, it is much to be feared that it is equally true that the practice of many is worse than their creed.

In regard to the Scriptural doctrine of God's forgiveness, we hold it to be as plain as words can make anything that it is forgiveness of past sin, not of future, and that no sin is forgiven until it is at once past, confessed, and had a renewed application through faith to the blood of Jesus exercised toward it. To quote Scripture to this effect would be almost endless ("if he *have* committed sins they *shall be* forgiven him"), while we defy any man to produce a single text which in itself, and in harmony with the analogy of faith, will bear an interpretation in support of the other view. We should at once content ourselves with referring to the Prayer taught by our Lord to his disciples. But we are informed that the Brethren (and, certainly, in strict consistency with their doctrine) decline the use of that Prayer. We should be glad for their own sakes to have this denied even at the expense of their consistency. As we shall not trouble the reader with

many Scripture references, we would for a moment dwell upon this.

And we might well ask whether it was very consistent for our Lord, or very like His usual wisdom and goodness, to answer a request for teaching in relation to prayer, by giving a model of prayer apparently complete in itself, and which might be used by itself without addition or modification, or which might be taken as a mere model upon which free prayer might be formed ; and all this without the least hint that, within about three short years, it would lose all fitness for use by itself, all propriety as a model, and become misleading, and therefore positively injurious. We should think this to be rather startling doctrine, and would give most people long pause before they could adopt it ; but if it is unfit for use now, that is the inevitable conclusion let men disguise it as they may. For ourselves, and we believe we can say for innumerable more, we have more trust in the Lord's wisdom and in the Lord's goodness than to believe any such thing. Truth is always consistent with itself, error never is ; and we do humbly think that, without arrogating to ourselves, and to those who hold with us, any peculiar penetration or wisdom, the doctrine which we believe we have received from the Lord is consistent at once with Scripture and within itself, while, as we think, we are prepared to show that the doctrine of the Brethren is not consistent with itself, and, what is a far more serious matter, is not consistent with Scripture.

The Brethren themselves acknowledge that an act of sin interrupts or breaks up their communion with God. Is that an evil ? And, if it be an evil, is it penal ?—is it a chastisement of God for sin ? And, if so, when the communion is restored, is it restored by an act of forgiveness upon God's part following upon repentance, confession, and faith on the part of man ? Or, if the com-

munion is interrupted by sin and restored upon confession, if that act of restoration is not an act of forgiveness, what is it? If the act of sin which interrupted it was not an offence, what was it? But if it was an offence, then it needed forgiveness. And what can be the objection to the idea of forgiveness? Is it that, while it is a fit enough term for the sinner on his first return to God, it is not a becoming one for the child of God on his return from his wandering? We cannot believe that such is the reason, and yet what it can be, we profess to be wholly unable to conceive; for it is not unworthy of even a child who has erred to receive forgiveness, as it is not unworthy of even a father's reconciliation to call it by the name of forgiveness. If the "Parable of the Prodigal Son" is worth anything to the generations who were to arise after the generation to which it was first spoken, it is by way of example of the spirit which should actuate *every* prodigal, and of the overflowing forgiveness which our heavenly Father is ready to extend to all, who, like the Prodigal, do not only resolve to return, but who, like him, do actually "arise, and go to their Father." And, now, we feel thankful that we have reached

#### THE CONCLUSION,

For we are not lovers of controversy, believing that generally it is unfavourable to the spirit which should actuate all who are brethren in and of Christ. Why, then, it may be asked did you begin it? We are not inclined to admit that we did begin it. It is manifest from the lecture that the doctrines which we challenge as unscriptural have long been disseminated among us, and if the style of the lecture is any index to the style of the verbal ministrations of Brethren, then, we fear, the teachers of what we believe to be a sounder creed, have had but little respect or tenderness at their hands. The doctrine for which we have been contending, and which in

all its essential features has been the doctrine of the Christian Church, from its very beginning till now, is characterised as false, and as having its origin in "intolerant, bigotted religiousness." If this is a sample of the spirit of charity and love, over the lack of which the lecturer so mourns, we shall beg leave to differ from him again, and to say of it the less the better. We are compared with Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians, though we imagine it is not meant to say that all these incompatible characters meet in our single person, or in any individual among the associates in our doctrine; bad enough, in all conscience, if the Society of which we form a part is made of men sharing these unamiable characters among them. Let us hope that the Loving Eye which goes deeper into character than man can, may find something better in us, even "some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel."

We have allowed that controversy is not pleasant, and, if it be not necessary, it is still more unsafe; yet to contend, and earnestly, too, for the faith is recognised Scriptural duty. We believe that it is for the faith once delivered to the saints, and with all our respect for the zeal of the Brethren, and notwithstanding our thorough belief in their Christian character, we must add that for that faith we are ready to contend to the last,—only praying the Lord to enable us to do it, not in faithfulness only, but also in love. We will not bandy terms of reproach with any man, but if the lecturer can re-read the conclusion of his lecture, and feel satisfied that the spirit in which it is written combines at once the spirit of humility, pure zeal for truth, and the meekness of love, we shall only say that, for his own sake, we are sorry for it. At all events, we decline following the example, and shall, in the meantime, persist in our belief that the Christian conduct of the Brethren is better than their creed—that creed, we think, we have shown is not coincident with Scrip-

ture teaching, and every departure from that only standard of saving truth is fraught with danger, even when the departure is unintentional and in ignorance ;—not that any man is to be called upon to renounce what he believes to be truth, but every man is bound to try his creed by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever ; and, if this is the bounden duty of the private Christian, much more is it the duty of the teacher of others ; and, if it is solemn duty to take heed what we hear, it is yet more imperative to take heed what we teach.

We wish only further to say, that whether we have been able to carry out the spirit which at the commencement we professed is not for us to judge. It is no charity to forbear the words of censure when in conscience you feel that censure is due, and we have not forborne them. We believe the errors held by the Brethren are neither few nor unimportant, and are, perhaps, of more importance because of the consequences to which they naturally, almost necessarily tend, though possibly quite unintentionally on the part of those who hold them. We can admire the zeal with which they propagate their views, without being blind to the erroneousness of these views. We have a thorough conviction of, and admiration for their attachment to our common Lord and Master, and we earnestly wish that an equal attachment to the Head may inspire all the members of the one body, and that an equal zeal, combined with greater purity of truth, may increasingly characterise *all the brethren* of the One Lord, in whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. So be it, O Lord !

May the Lord give us all understanding in all things !  
AMEN !











