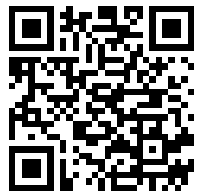

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19
TRUTH FOR THE TIMES.

A LETTER

TO THE DISSENTERS.

BY W. H. DORMAN.

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TRUTH FOR THE TIMES.

BELOVED FRIENDS—

There is a debt of love which every follower of the blessed Jesus owes to every other—a debt that is to be always paying and yet always owed. “Owe no man anything but to love one another.” “Love is of God,” and “he that loveth *not*, knoweth not God; for God is love.”

To every christian in the world I desire continually, in this respect, to feel myself a debtor; but to you *especially*, on the ground of former circumstances and connexions, I am bound to manifest this “love, which seeketh not her own.”

As a body of professing christians, separated from the national Establishment, it is your lot to hear, on the one hand, the arguments and advocacy of satisfied adherents, and on the other to be assailed by the reproaches and accusations of interested rivals; so that it may be the more freely allowed, as it is the more necessary, for one to address you, who, through the mercy of the Lord, will not flatter nor revile, but will employ the quiet language of truth and love.

In writing to you on a former occasion, I have reason to believe there was some abatement in the force of the general truth presented, on account of its being associated with circumstances of a merely personal and local nature, which makes me anxious, for the truth's sake, and for your sakes, to present the question at issue between the word of God and the principles and practice of Dissent, entirely disencumbered to your minds. It has been employed as an argument against the practical bearing of the statements, in the book alluded to; that “its author was unfavourably connected with Dissent, and therefore,

while the evils pointed out might in his case be true, it would by no means follow that these evils were the universal, or even the general, accompaniments of the system." This attempt to give a limited range to the charge of error against the systems of Dissent, has been used by the enemy to hinder the progress of inquiry, and therefore I would plainly say, the conflict of God's word with these systems is not with *the accidental evil* of them merely, but with *the principles* themselves. Most surely the question to be settled by your consciences, beloved friends, is not whether there may be certain evils amongst you which it is high time for the hand of reformation to correct, but whether the principles on which you are associated are God's principles, (the principles of his word) and whether a christian continuing in connexion with them must not act, unwittingly it may be, in contrariety to the expressed purposes and ends of God's constitution of his church.

If I were not sure that the evils of Dissent, when tested by the word of God, are evils in principle—not accidental or local, but radical and universal—I should feel bound at the present moment to be engaged with the godly amongst you in endeavouring to correct and reform the corruptions that have come in; whatever grief of heart I might encounter in a work so arduous and ungrateful. For though the practical evils and abuses of the church are most frequently used by the Lord to rouse the consciences of his children, they can never of themselves form a legitimate ground of separation. For example, the church of Corinth was exceedingly corrupt in its practice, and needed the correction of godly discipline, but its principles and constitution as God's assembly (*ἐκκλησία*) were untouched, and therefore no barrier was presented to the removal of the evil; so that separation in that case would have been a sin. The same remark will apply to the seven churches in the book of Revelations, which are so often appealed to by churchmen as an argument against separation from the Establishment. These churches were in truth *God's assemblies* in the places named, and contained all the believers in those places, in separation from the heathen around them; although corporately they were in a state of declension, and the subjects of rebuke and warning from the Lord. They were gatherings of true christians originally, and

although the tide of corruption had strongly set in, they were still *churches*, and could be so recognised by the Lord. The original principles of their constitution were not subverted, although the decay of love and the introduction of error in various forms, which resulted in the removal of their candlestick out of its place, were marked and condemned by the Holy Ghost. So much could not be said of the national Establishment, which never pretended to be a *gathering of christians* at all, but is a plan for giving to all *the population* the name of christians, and what are called christian ordinances; without the necessity of their professing even in any spiritual sense to be converted to Christ or born of God. And poor as the claim to equality with these churches is, it would fail in many essential points to be established by any denominational gathering now. The candlestick, or united testimony for the Lord, in every case is gone; though it is not denied that the individual believers may, in measure, shine as "lights in the world." It is not, therefore, "the setting up of a pure church," as some have said, nor the bringing back of an outward apostolic order, that I advocate; but I desire, by the help of the Lord, to awaken the attention of his children to the fact that the whole professing body has gone away from God's principles, and that nothing which is now gloried in by the different sects, in this country, and in christendom, has any counterpart in the word of God; neither answering to the church's original constitution, nor standing in the hope of its final glory.

That every branch of Dissent, holding the foundation truths of the gospel, has borne some fruit to God, I believe it would be injustice to deny. The same must be acknowledged of the faithful part of the ministry of the Establishment. But as in this latter case you justly distinguish between the good which flows from the grace of God in the individual, and the unchanged evil of the system in the midst of which it is found; so must you now, in your own case, judge between the measure of blessing that the Lord has given to the testimony of his own truth amongst your various denominations, and the character of your ecclesiastical systems, which may still be as much at variance with the true constitution of the church of God, as the grosser system of the Establishment from which you have seceded. It is an easy

task, and one that you have not feared to encounter, to prove by the scriptures the Church of England to be wrong—wrong both in practice and in principle—but conscience requires the other part of the question to be settled before it can be well at rest, and that is, to ascertain from the same scriptures your own systems to be right. For if, in your judgment, as well as in truth, the condemnation of Popery and of the Established Church, is found in their want of accordance with the word of the Lord, it is but simple honesty to view everything amongst yourselves as approved or condemned by the same rule.

Almost every scriptural argument employed by the Reformers to prove the Church of Rome apostate, and thus to warrant their separation from its communion, may be turned by the Papist against the very church the Reformers themselves set up. And almost every objection *justly* advanced by yourselves against the notion of a successional ministry, and episcopal ordination, and the unscriptural division of God's children into clergy and laity, and the unwarranted assumptions of a priesthood, might be directed by an enemy against your own collegiate training, your ordained ministry, your election of the rulers of God's church, and the ecclesiastical order you have adopted, however little it is suspected by many amongst you of being unsound.

If I did not see most clearly from the word of God, as I have said before, in substance, that every system of Dissent, as well as the Establishment, is opposed to the blessed rule and freedom of the spirit of God in the church, and subversive of the true unity of the children of God, as well as infected by the most determined worldliness, my heart would feel but little disposed to be dissociated from all, and, according to my power, in conflict and testimony against the evil of all.

It is the substitution of man's will for the blessed liberty and rule of the Holy Ghost, and the destruction of the church's unity by the principles of sectarian division, in the constitution of every class of dissenting churches, that, my heart grieves to say, is the turning point of their condemnation. Much might be said about the evil *consequences* of such a state of things to the honor of the Lord and to the children of God—for alas! they are not gathered to Jesus, and are therefore "scattered abroad"—but it is enough to assert, if true, that your systems in

their very principles tend to the entire suppression of the Spirit's rule and ministry amongst you, by the establishment of man's order and appointment, and that they necessarily hinder by sectarianism the development of the oneness of all believers in Christ. I have no hesitation in saying that with the feelings which so generally prevail amongst christians, whatever measure of the Spirit, producing unity, might be given, it would be deemed an *actual loss*, if their own peculiar distinctions must be given up, and their own separate denominational standing were to be merged in the simple gathering of true believers to Christ.

So deeply has the spirit of sectarianism taken root, that it is an ordinary circumstance to hear real christians speaking of the divisions of the church, or the denominations of christians, rather as a matter of congratulation than of sorrow and regret; and it would be an exceedingly hard task to convince them that what began in carnality at Corinth, had not thrown off its character in its consummation and ripened fruit in the consolidated divisions of the present day.

This is a painful charge, but I am sure the proof of it may be too well sustained, and many a conscience amongst you can bear witness to its truth. I am not indeed confident that I shall be able so to mark the error in words as to carry conviction to the mere reasoning mind, but I believe, through the help of the Lord, I may so state the question as to mark it with sufficient definiteness to guide the inquiries of the simple-minded disciple of the Lord.

The doctrine of the scriptures, beloved friends, on this subject, is plainly this: that the living power of truth, and unity, and worship, and ministry, and order, in the church of God, is to be found only in the presence and power of the Holy Ghost. This truth has been practically overlooked by every existing associated body of christians; still faith demands as much the recognition of a *present comforter* as of an *absent Lord*. For just in the same manner as Christ, the head of the church, is absent, the Holy Ghost, the comforter of the church, is present. "*If I go not away*" (says the Lord when unfolding this truth) *the comforter will not come unto you.*" It is upon the same testimony that our souls are assured of either. But this promise of the Spirit which was accomplished on the day of Pentecost, was not for the transient

blessing of the disciples, nor to be a guide into all truth, and to give power to witness for Jesus during what are called the miraculous ages of the church alone, but to abide with the church for ever. "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another comforter that he may *abide with you for ever*, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him." And it is the verification of this to the simplicity of faith which gives its special character to that word of blessing; "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

It is the Holy Spirit that is the immediate author of the church's *life*, as composed of believers, who are "born of God"—"born of the Spirit"—"living stones built up a spiritual house." And it is only through the abiding presence of that same Spirit, with the believers here on earth, that there can be any real entrance into the knowledge of their blessed sustaining connexion with a risen and exalted head, or any abiding power in the soul of that hope of glory, which amidst the wreck of every earthly hope "maketh not ashamed." "We have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is *the earnest of our inheritance*, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

I believe that in the ordinary teaching upon the work of the Spirit, there will be found the utmost degree of unsoundness, both with regard to his operation on the soul, as quickening it into the life of God, and also as to the character of the life thus given, as well as upon the presence of the Spirit *indwelling in the believer*, and thus constituting him a temple of the Holy Ghost; and the result to the children of God is lowness of practice and uncertainty, weakness of faith and the absence of spiritual joy. But it is upon the presence of the Spirit corporately, or in the body of believers, for their guidance and edification, that the most widely-extended practical error exists. The church (none will deny it) was expressly "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"—"a holy temple in the Lord;" but his presence in that habitation, in his very essential

character, as directing all its ministries, and "distributing to every man severally as he wills," is utterly denied; not unfrequently in words, universally in fact. Except as an *influence* to give energy to a merely human order and arrangement, and effect to a humanly organised ministry, his presence is denied, and his own blessed liberty and rule are feared. Hence it is found impossible (so ordered in the wisdom of God) for any association of christians, however gathered, to take up the full instructions of scripture for the guidance of the church as a body—a spiritual body—where the presence of the Spirit is not acknowledged and waited on in the dependence of faith.

It is the distinctive blessing of the church that "Christ as a Son is over his own house; whose house are we;" and he has never committed the control of this "house of God, which is the church of the living God," to any but that "other comforter, and Spirit of truth," who was sent down on the day of Pentecost, first to gather souls out of the world by the power of testimony to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and then to rule and instruct them, as gathered into the "household of God." The edification and ministry of the church as the body of Christ, as far as it is of God, from the time of its constitution until it is gathered in its completeness in glory, is in the hands of the Lord Jesus, its ascended head, and carried into effect by the power of the Holy Ghost. This we learn expressly from Ephesians the iv. "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. * * He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of *the body of Christ*; TILL we all 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*." It is upon the continuous supply of these *gifts, as gifts from Christ* (I do not speak of apostles and prophets) that the edification of believers is made to depend; and the great thing to be guarded against by the children of God is, the adoption or maintenance of any human system or regulation that would hinder the fulness of Christ's love in the bestowment of these gifts, or that would fetter their exercise by the power of man's appointment, or that would supply their place by human training and mere intellectual power.

But here, beloved friends, your order, in common with every other existing religious system, fails; fails in a primary and essential point. For the basis of each system, whatever its modification, whether dissenting or established, is the assumed competency (i. e. the wisdom and power) to regulate that which is distinctively *God's* household, *God's* family! One might think it sufficient honor to be brought into the household, and made in the riches of his grace the "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty," without assuming the authority to interfere in the regulation of its affairs. If this, however, is done, it matters little whether it is by the fiat of the government, or the decrees of conference, or the vote of the people. "Christ is a Son over his own house;" and his wisdom in its regulation cannot be contravened without dishonour and loss. And hence it is, beloved friends, that though the Lord may give a measure of blessing to the preaching of the gospel amongst you for the conversion of souls, there is so little establishment of believers in the truth, and so entire a negation of *the communion of saints*. For the blessed Spirit can never act in power for the establishment of the children of God in peace and joy, and for their communion in love, where other objects are pursued than the glory of Christ, and where his own presence and liberty are disowned, and his perfect order for the edification of the saints is set aside. "Jesus did not many mighty works there (at Nazareth) because of their unbelief"—not from the want of power, but "because of their *unbelief*." And in this respect we may learn instruction by the example of Israel in the desert. It was while they were daily attended by the cloud of Jehovah's presence, and were every morning fed by the manna from his hand, that they asked the faithless question, "*Is God amongst us or not?*" And I doubt not, the sin of the present dispensation, "the apostacy," which will issue in its cutting off in judgment, will result from the practical denial of God's living presence, now on earth, by his Spirit, although the very existence of the church and the entire sum of its blessings are inseparably connected with the continuance of that presence to the end.

But the presence of the Spirit, where believers are met in the name of Christ, is wholly a matter of *faith*; and the evil of the most reformed portions of the church is, that while the necessity of faith in the doctrines of the

gospel, which are the grounds of salvation, is admitted, no such exercise of faith is thought necessary, with regard to the presence of the Holy Ghost, as essential to the communion, and order, and worship of the saints. It is, indeed, a strange thing in the present state of the children of God, and a deep trial of their faith, for two or three to meet together in the name of Christ, in the confident expectation that his presence, by the Spirit, will meet and comfort their souls, beyond what could be attained by the most commanding services under the arrangement of man. But wherever two or three are thus gathered together, the promised blessing and presence of the Lord will surely be enjoyed; and enjoyed in a depth and richness that the most exciting ministry and outward order must fail to afford. In this respect there is the fullest application of that word—"according to your faith be it unto you." But if dependence on the promise of Christ be wanting—and the difference between dependence upon the presence of the Lord, and dependence upon an arranged order of man cannot be seen—I am willing to confess that all further explanation must only leave the soul to the wondering inquiry, "*how can these things be?*" Still the certainty of the Lord's promise will remain; and the blessing to the obedient heart will be untouched. "If we believe not, he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself!"

But the habit, so nearly universal, of contemplating *individual salvation* as the final end of God's mercy in Christ Jesus, has almost entirely neutralized the power of conscience as to any further purpose of God, in the displayed union of his children here on earth. So great a degree of prominence has been given to the matter of personal hope and confidence, that the scriptures have been either overlooked or deflected from their immediate application, that present the instructions of the Spirit in relation to the *united* walk of believers, separated from the world, and unitedly set to be God's family, to rebuke by their love the world's hatred, and to be his witness and light in the midst of the surrounding darkness. Indeed, almost the only notion of a church which the most of christians have conceived, is merely an organized body for sustaining the preaching of the gospel, instead of a gathering of Christ's sheep to be fed and instructed under his shepherd-care. This is all that is practically exhibited

in the churches of the various denominations in our day. Important, however, as the preaching of the gospel confessedly is, it is only God's instrument for gathering sinners out of the world into the church. The *world* is the sphere of the evangelist; the church is the school of Christ, where the weak are to be supported, and the feeble-minded to be comforted, and believers are to be taught the whole counsel of God. And here it is that the varied ministries of the Spirit, and the energy of every joint and member of the body have their appointed place.

I most freely admit that in some points the *theory* of Independency, and of some of the other systems of Dissent, is *outwardly* right. But in each of them there is this radical defect, that the wisdom and the will of man have a place both in the framing and the working of them, that virtually supersedes the necessity of dependence upon the Spirit of God. And at best they are but pre-arranged and adopted forms for bringing out the life of the body of Christ, without the power to command the corresponding energy of the Spirit, and often without any reference to him on whose presence all true life depends. Consequently, where there may be a measure of real dependence upon the Lord, and of simplicity of intention, there must of necessity be to a large extent the exhibition of form without the power. The Spirit has his own ways of working, and has marked the channels in which his grace delights to flow; but if these be contemned, and channels of human prescription be rested in, the result must be what the experience of God's children has so largely proved—leanness and faintness as in a land of drought, instead of rivers of living water flowing out of the bellies of them that believe. And thus, as in the case of an individual believer, the outward form of his conduct would be valueless if only the result of an imitative piety, instead of the outflowing of the life and grace of Christ in the soul; so the adoption of the most scriptural outward form by the church would be valueless, as an imitation of apostolic models, instead of the development in vitality of the energy of the blessed Spirit.

And here comes in the point of failure in those churches that boast of having exclusively adopted the apostolic form. They have forgotten that the imitation of a primitive *form* is not the recovery of the well-spring of *life*.

Nothing is more easily deducible from scripture than the order of the apostolic churches, and nothing can be more easy than *outwardly* to imitate them; but *the life* cannot be imitated! And without this it is but the setting up of a statue instead of a living man, or the revival of a mummy from its dust to set as a thing of life—"a name to live, but dead."

In this essential point then, beloved friends, are your systems defective, that they are not framed on the belief of the continued presence of the Holy Spirit, and their order is so settled as to exclude his liberty and energy for the edification of the saints. And the consequence is, disorder and weakness amongst the children of God, and a failure to exhibit to the world what the church, as God's redeemed family, was designed to exhibit in its heavenly character, and constitution, and hopes. But this is not their only failing point; for they are equally opposed to the development of that *unity* of all true believers, which the Lord has in this day led so many of his children to long for, after so many ages of disunion and practical neglect of the desire of Christ that they all might be one.

Take that form which assumes to be the nearest to scriptural correctness, I mean practical Independency, with which the Baptist denomination agrees, except that it makes the question of Baptism another ground of division; this system neither assumes nor contemplates the oneness of the children of God; nor does it in reality gather souls on the ground of all believers being one in Christ. A dissenting church is not really a union of believers in Christ on the common ground of redemption by the blood of Christ, but it is a voluntary association of professed christians holding certain principles, by which they are distinguished from other christians having different judgments on these points. It is not a gathering together on that ground in which all true believers must be agreed, (being washed by the blood of Christ) but upon those points on which they confessedly differ. This is not the Lord's principle of gathering: "he died that he might *gather together in one* the children of God that were scattered abroad."

An Independent church is an organized body of professed christians claiming the right to *choose* their own pastor, to appoint their own officers, to *vote* in the reception or exclusion of their own members, and to exercise

all the functions of a self-constituted body, without control from the secular power, and without responsibility to any other of the members of the body of Christ. This is the principle of Dissent; there may be modifications of it, but this is its basis principle. And in most cases (i. e. wherever there is a chapel) all the permanency that can be given by legal documents, is imparted to this system by trust-deeds and endowments, &c.

Now while I am writing this description, which I am sure none of you will question, my very heart is sad at the thought of the complexity of error (as to the character and constitution of the church of God) it contains. To say nothing of the absence of all authority from the word of God for the exercise of particular acts—as the people's choosing their own pastors and voting in the reception of members, and in cases of church discipline—I see nothing throughout but the hopeless recognition of *man's will*, and *man's right*, to the exclusion of the authority of the Holy Ghost, and subjection to the expressed will of him who "loved the church and gave himself for it." The church is *God's* building; *God's* husbandry; *God's* house; and it is subjection to the mind of *God* that is the principle on which everything connected with its welfare is to be carried on. This principle allows of no place for the wisdom, or the will, or the thoughts of man. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of *God*."

I do not, however, in speaking of the sectarian character of dissenting churches, deny the fact that in many cases there is admission to communion without any direct act of adherence being required; but if the conscience of a christian seeking membership should be concerned to know the rules and constitution of the body he is about to join, it must then be disclosed that special membership is necessary to "*full communion*," and that he is in fact allying himself to a system such as I have just described: a system which I assert, in addition to its contrariety to the word of God, is chargeable with establishing a ground of sectarian distinction, and of thus dividing the body of Christ. I suppose I need hardly say to you, there is that which makes a man a christian, and thus brings him into the family of God, independently of his being a dissenter or a churchman, and altogether apart from any of the grounds on which the various denominations meet. It is

upon this ground alone, as gathered to Jesus by the power of his cross, that he ought to be gathered into the church of God. "Receive ye one another as Christ hath received us to the glory of God." The terms of salvation are the Lord's terms of communion. On these grounds the church will be gathered to the glory of Christ in heaven, and on these grounds should it be gathered as the witness of his grace on earth. Men may be sectarian in their feelings, and "all seek their own things, not the things that are Jesus Christ's," but the love of the blessed Jesus and the care of the Holy Spirit know no limit but that which embraces all the children of God. "Grace be with *all them that love our Lord Jesus* in sincerity."

If for a moment, however, it should be imagined that the principles of Dissent are not incompatible with this ground of fellowship, then I would ask, have I, or has any one of God's children, a passport to the individual love, and the congregated communion, and the free ministry in the church, when once it is ascertained that I belong to Christ? Will not your whole system rise up against me as an intruder if I attempt to act in the confidence of christian brotherhood, unless I am (*not only a christian*, but) a member of the church? And am I not debarred the exercise of any gift the Lord may have committed to me, by the decision of the people that only the man whom they have *chosen* shall have the right to minister to their souls? Beloved friends, there is a necessity for all this, while the objects sought by your union are something beyond the blessing of souls and the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ! If your object is only the glory of the Lord, and mine be the same, then nothing can keep us apart!

When the impositions of the Establishment caused the secession of above two thousand of her most godly ministers, Dissent was a matter of conscience toward God. It was the *dernier* resort of godly souls that had no objection in principle to an Establishment, but whose iniquity in imposing indifferent matters left them no longer at liberty to minister in its communion. Imperfect as this principle of separation was, it was at least a practical relief for a conscience exercised before God. Since that period Dissent has mainly owed its advancement in this country to the practical corruptions of the Established Church, and the absence of evangelical doctrines in the

preaching of the clergy. And until lately it might be said that any real care for godliness, or any zeal for the good of souls, was almost entirely confined to the different branches of those separated from the Establishment. Dissent is not now, however, so much a matter of conscience, generally speaking, as a choice of ministers, or denominational attachment, or educational bias, or some other mere outward circumstance. It is now known and boasted of as combining a great proportion of the wealth and intelligence and active industry of the country; and on these grounds it urges its claim to equality in ecclesiastical standing with the Establishment, and an increase of political power in the state.

These it may be pleaded are but practical evils, or by many may not be admitted as evils at all; but at any rate they are mourned over by many of the most spiritually-minded amongst yourselves, and are a grievous stumbling-block to conscience-stricken souls in the Establishment, seeking an asylum from the increasing errors and the advancing popery of the national church. They are evils which spring from the worldly principles that are incorporated in the systems of Dissent, and must ultimately prove destructive to godliness, and lead back again the stream of nonconformity, with augmented evils, into the swollen current of a general apostacy.

It is a humbling thing, and I feel the reproach of it a burden, to witness a body of men standing apart from the Establishment on the ground of its secularity and corruptions, and at the same time seeking with the utmost eagerness the very things on account of which they had professedly separated! But who can think that wealth, and fashion, and the honor of the world, and political ascendancy, are less worldly things in the heart of a dissenter than they are in the heart of a churchman? Can it be supposed that a civic feast is a less worldly thing, or attendance at it less an association with the world, because it happens to be a dissenter and not a churchman that is mayor? Can it be thought by one possessing the mind of Christ, that the Spirit of the Lord had anything more to do with the sumptuous banquet at Bath in honor of Mr. Jay, than if it had been given in honor of the hero of Waterloo at Apsley House? I mean in its spirit and principle, was it any more heavenly?—for I would not speak of these things as an enemy.

But, beloved friends, it is not a new device of Satan, to use the mere circumstance of outward separation to lull the mind into insensibility, and thus to neutralize any effectual testimony against the evil of the world! In this connexion one can hardly refer to the late exhibition at Manchester without a feeling of scepticism possessing the mind. It seems more than one can credit that six hundred professed ministers of Christ—whose plea against a political church is, “my kingdom is not of this world”—should be gathered together for a professedly political object—as a mere political assembly!—and so associated with Roman Catholic priests and the teachers of the denial of the divinity of Christ, as to confess that for their sakes, and to retain their presence and cooperation, they would refrain from commencing or closing their meetings with prayer! I confess these things are a matter of heaviness to my heart while I think of them, nor would I advert to them at all but for the sake of the consciences of many of God’s children that are blindly led into a sanction of these evils. I know that many amongst you have repudiated this exhibition, personally, and so far it is well; but, beloved friends, these things are but the legitimate fruits of “a learned ministry” and of your “advancement as a body in importance and intelligence,” which is so much your boast. A learned ministry, and advancement in wealth and intelligence, and enhanced worldly distinctions, will certainly have their results in this world—in the general estimation in which those who possess them are held, for they are things which the world can appreciate; and as our Lord said of the Pharisees: “*they have their reward.*” But alas! the friendship and esteem of the world are a poor substitute for that “honor which cometh from God only,” and that *victory over the world* which is only by the power of faith.

The natural feelings of my heart, and many and many an association would prompt me to desire to see you honored, and honoring God in your zeal and devotedness, and in your union with all the godly in holy separation from the world. The Lord knows I am not stoic enough to hear unmoved your reproach; I repeat it—I desire to see you in a position to be *honored*; or if reproached, it may be with the reproach which is itself an honor. “If ye be reproached for the *name of Christ* happy are ye; for the spirit for glory and of God resteth on you.”

I feel confident in the Lord that the question of another separation than that which your denominational designation indicates, must soon become a practical matter to those of you who are really mindful of the honor of the Lord, and are in truth desiring to be led by his Spirit. Others indeed who can see no higher object of attainment than the advancement of their distinctive principles, and no higher hope than their ultimate ascendancy as a religious sect, will doubtless fence themselves off on their respective grounds of separation, and will practically stand for Independency, or Presbyterianism, or Wesleyanism, or the Baptist connexion. But these are distinctions that have no countenance in the word of God. They are indeed the badges of the church's sin, and however valued by men, they are viewed by the Lord as the carnal divisions of his family, and barriers to the exhibition of its union before the world. They are divisions which necessity might once suggest, (i. e. when escape from established wickedness was the question) but which now the true ground of the union of all believers is, in the goodness of the Lord, brought to light, it is but pride, or ignorance, or prejudice, or wilfulness to maintain.

There can be no question about the oneness of the church in its ultimate destination in glory; all will then be assuredly "gathered together in one." As little question can there be whether the church is in possession of the constituents of that oneness now; or that it is according to the mind of Christ that this blessed unity should be displayed. Nothing but that which is circumstantial—the glory—remains to be added; for "there is one body and one spirit, one hope of our calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of *all*, who is above all, and through all, and *in you all*." Corresponding to this, is the essential power of this union presented in the words of our Lord, "at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." And further, "that they all may be one as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." The moral effect of this union, as displayed to the world, is then added—"that the world may *believe* that thou hast sent me." Thus do we find the Lord declaring that the union of the church in *grace* would give to the world a proof, (in the exhibition of a divine

love) that he had been sent of God; as its union ere long in *the glory* with Christ will give the proof, not only that he was sent of God, but that his despised followers have been loved of God with the same love that he bears toward his only-begotten Son. "*The glory* which thou gavest me have I given them, that they may be one as we are one, * * * that the world may *know* that thou hast sent me, and *hast loved them* (wondrous truth!) *as thou hast loved me.*"

Here then are all the elements of that perfect and eternal union, in which the church of God is finally to be displayed in glory, with the expressed desire of him who "loved the church and gave himself for it," that this union should be now manifested to the world, as the witness to it of his having been sent of God. But how has this desire of our Lord been answered by our faithless and selfish hearts? Alas! by the most shameless practical neglect. Regardless of the blessings of our heavenly calling, and lightly esteeming the honor of our master, we have in the very highest walk of our profession been seeking those things which would bring ease and credit to ourselves; and instead of exhibiting "the mind that was in Christ Jesus," (who humbled himself and made himself of no reputation) we have come under the condemnation of that word, "all seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's."

Plainly christians, as christians, can have no separate interests. The leading of God's Spirit is never to any object that is not equally the concern of all the children of God. The Spirit is ever true in his leading to the glory of Christ, and ever contemplates the good of *all*, and not a part of the family of the redeemed. That is not of God, whatever it may be, that is a ground of separation amongst christians, or that puts them upon seeking or maintaining anything which does not equally demand the regard of all who are the true followers of Christ. No ages of sectarian establishment can ever erase from it the brand mark of carnality; nor can the universality of the church's divisions ever discharge the conscience of a believer from the obligation to seek "that they all may be one." It is an exhortation still binding upon our souls to "mark them which cause divisions and offences *contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned*, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our

Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

I know that amongst *true* christians there is but little conscience about these things, and it is grievous to think what is the cause. It is simply the want of an assured confidence before God, through the blood of Jesus Christ, of acceptance and the forgiveness of sins, on the part of the godly; and the love of the world on the part of mere nominal professors. These are the things which keep the soul from looking with any interest into the privileges and responsibilities of the church (as a whole) as "the epistle of Christ" to the world now, and also from contemplating the blessedness of its brightening hopes, as the bride of Christ and the heir of eternal glory! If your souls, beloved friends, were happy in the power of the cross, as giving you at once, *on God's testimony*, the knowledge of completed redemption and the assurance of coming glory; nothing could then prevent your looking into all the blessed will of your Heavenly Father, and seeking by the power of the Spirit to enter into all the glories of Christ; since this would only be tracing your heavenly portion—for "all things are yours"—and the blessed Spirit is given for the special purpose to take of the things of Christ, and to show them to you—"to guide you into all truth—and to show you things to come." But if this personal question be still unsettled, or hangs in doubt, there is at once a barrier to all further interest and inquiry as to the kingdom of God. So that, beloved friends, the practical indifference that is manifested by all denominations on the subject of the communion of saints, and the corporate witness of the church, and the prophetic testimony to the coming of the Lord, becomes an exponent of the low state of christianity amongst them, and tells the sad tale of the absence of "joy and peace in believing" in the hearts of those that are dear to the Lord.

Beloved friends, many of you have *not* joy in the Lord: you have believed through grace, but you do not "*joy in God* through our Lord Jesus Christ." But this is not because the testimony of the cross, when simply apprehended and rested in, (and the Spirit is not grieved) does not still impart a joy unspeakable and full of glory." But philosophy, and criticism, and scholastic learning, have reduced the blessed truths of christianity as they are

presented to you, to a powerlessness and poverty that are inconceivable by one who has been accustomed to feed only in the fat pastures of the word of God. Eternal blessings to our God that christianity itself has lost nothing of its vital power. The systematic divinity of the pulpit and the press may indeed leave the heart without joy, and the conscience without effect, and the life without power, but "the truth as it is in Jesus" drawn forth from the living fountain of the word, has got strength, and life, and comfort, and joy, and hope in it. It gives a real victory over the world, and imparts a present rest and satisfaction to the soul, which leave their possessor nothing to wish or hope for, but the hour when Jesus will return, and the joy of his eternal presence will close the tale of the imperfections and sorrows of a sojourn on earth. The exhortation of the Spirit, "rejoice in the Lord always," was not designed for the first ages of christianity merely; but it is the blessed privilege, secured in the death and resurrection of Jesus, of every child of God; of even the feeblest and most downcast believer in Christ. All that is wanting to us, is a heart to value our portion, and a resolution through grace to take our estimate of it from God, and not from man. And his testimony is: "as many as *received him*, (Christ) to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that *believe* upon his name." And "if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with our Lord Jesus Christ; "if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also *glorified together*."

I know there is a fear in many minds lest a door should be opened for self-deception and carelessness of walk, through pressing the privilege of assured confidence before God of every true believer in Christ. Nothing but laxity of principle and supineness can be predicted as the fruit of the knowledge of present salvation and acceptance, (as the result of the reception of God's testimony concerning the work and worth of Christ) instead of the yearnings of the renewed soul after peace, and a doubtful hope that at last there will be deliverance from wrath at the day of judgment, and some brightening comforting evidence to the soul of its safety as it approaches the hour of death. But does not this fear of the blessed ground of a believer's present joy and confidence, tell again the sad tale of unapprehended grace? No marvel at the grovelling aims and worldly spirit of the

children of God, when they are led to fear the very knowledge of their portion in Christ, and the hope of their calling is taken clean away! But what in reality is this fear that believers should be too fully assured of their present safety and their coming glory, through the knowledge of Christ? Does it spring from anything but the acknowledged worldliness of the church's present position? Does it not tell of the presence of worldly inducements to a false profession of Christ, because "the offence of the cross has ceased," and it is no longer "going forth to Jesus without the camp bearing his reproach?" In a word, the departure of the church from its true position and character, as called out from the world and set as the witness for Christ in his absence in the heavens, has removed the true guards which the Lord designed to be thrown around his people's profession, and now godliness of walk is attempted to be secured by the spirit of legal bondage, instead of by the constraining power of love.

And in truth it must be ever so; for the want of an apprehension of the fulness of grace lets down the soul into the lowness of a carnal walk, and the effort to get rest to the conscience in outward ordinances and works, in the place of the purging of the blood of Christ; and then, reciprocally, carnal aims and a worldly course disqualify the soul either to understand or to use the blessed liberty of grace. But let a man's professed assurance in Christ bring him into reproach in the world, and into suffering for the sake of Christ, and into the close inspection of his walk in christian fellowship, and you have at once the check to a false profession, and the place for that exhortation of the Spirit, "cast not away therefore your confidence which hath great recompense of reward." But all these objections and difficulties, as they have but one origin, so do they lead but to one conclusion; and that is, the truth of God's word is surely right, and the aims and the constitution of the professing churches are as surely wrong! For they can neither bear the fulness of God's truth, nor the order of his Spirit, nor the measure of his liberty, nor the freedom of his grace. This is a solemn conclusion, and one that I pray the Lord your consciences may deal with in the presence of God and by the light of his word.

For indeed, beloved friends, it is not enough to say,

“it would be more consistent and more blessed if all christians were gathered together on the simple ground of their being one in Christ, instead of standing apart on the ground of their sectarian distinctions:” it is God’s principle of gathering; and all other gathering, whether of denominational union or of mere personal ministry, is but scattering abroad. It is not enough to say, it is only consistent that the edification of the church, as the body of Christ, should not be made to depend upon *one* member merely, but in measure upon all; nor that it is a wise regulation that there should be liberty of ministry to all whom the Spirit has gifted for that end—it is God’s rule; it is God’s order! The gifts of his Spirit are bestowed in the fulness and the richness of the grace of Christ, for the blessing, and comfort, and the guarding of his church; so that its blessing can in no way be secured but by the full liberty for the development and ministry of these gifts. Hence God has commanded—made it a matter of command, and thus guarded the closing of the door by making it a matter of *personal responsibility*—that “he that exhorteth should wait on exhorting, and he that teacheth on teaching; and as every man hath received the gift, so minister the same, as good *stewards* of the *manifold* grace of God.”

It is not now, beloved friends, a question whether the church can be brought back as a whole to act upon the true principles of its heavenly standing, but whether its departure from these principles (as foretold in the scriptures) shall be acknowledged, and whether it is the will of the Lord that godly souls, seeing the evil and apostacy that have come in, should continue their association with the evil, or leave it to walk in humble separatedness of heart to God, and to meet together in whatever weakness upon the unchanging principle of the Lord’s blessing: ‘wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.’ As to *corporate reform*, on which the hopes of some of you, who do not deny the evil, are resting, nothing is to be expected from it. God’s principles and objects in the constitution of his church have been set aside, and the principles, and order, and objects of man have been largely substituted, so that a barrier exists at the threshold of reform. The very attempt would end in disruption. “New wine cannot be put into old bottles!” What hope can be entertained

from reformation when the acknowledged aims of the church are not the aims of Christ? If reformation were to commence its work in earnest at the present moment, would not its energies be directed against the obstacles which each party felt were a hindrance to its advancement as a religious sect? How can any system which regards the good opinion of the world, and looks at the advancement of its adherents in wealth and cultivation as indications of prosperity, and is seeking for preeminence through an educated ministry, (which every sect is doing) be made to bend to the spiritual aims of Christ's kingdom? and who has not said in vain, "how can ye believe who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?" It must not be wondered at if your ministers are slow to admit these truths, since everything in their official character and position is opposed to them. But there are men of truth amongst them, and hard as it is for a man to relinquish power and influence, and reputation of any kind, however acquired, the grace of the Lord is sufficient even for this. And if there were more faithfulness and prayer, and more of the power of a living testimony in those who see these evils and are outwardly disjoined from them, such instances would be less rare; but the work is the Lord's, and the word of God and the Spirit of God must be our guide. I would, however, urge upon all that are the Lord's to consider whether they are individually walking according to the mind of the Lord. Is there nothing, beloved friends, that you are valuing and pursuing which conscience condemns? Have you practically separated from everything which divides the children of God? Is there no object that you are pursuing which is incompatible with your not being of this world? Is there nothing in the motive and objects of your religious zeal but that all the godly ought to be partakers with you in? Is the word of God so your guide, and so read with prayer, and the teaching of the Holy Spirit so rested in, as to enable you to obey the injunction, "prove all things, hold fast that which is good?"

These are desultory questions; but, by the power of the Spirit, they may lead to the establishment of healthful principles in your souls. For there is not a more affecting feature of the present day, than the wide diffusion of theological knowledge, and the endless multiplication of

religious books, and at the same time the gross ignorance of the scriptures, and their almost universal practical neglect. Most striking is the application of that scripture now—"their fear toward me is taught by the precepts of men." The Lord I know can, and does in measure, bless his own truth to the conversion of souls in whatever form it may be presented; but there cannot be solid joy or holy and consistent walking, unless the word of God be studied by the children of God, as a book in which themselves have the deepest stake and interest—their own book—God's gift to his children, to unfold to them all the blessed grace of his heart, and all the counsels of his will. For Christians to leave the study and interpretation of the scriptures to their ministers, is just to make priests of *them*, and to become Romanists in principle themselves. And the difference is not great between being deprived of the privilege of a personal study of the word of life, and not being allowed the capacity to understand it through the teaching of the Holy Ghost, until a meaning has been put upon it which criticism or learning must divine.

As it regards your systems, beloved friends, on which I have been led so freely to animadvert, I doubt not there may have been in past days an application, in principle at least, of that scripture, "the times of this ignorance God winked at;" but its application is taken away now, since the Lord has been pleased to bring out again to light, both the true principle of the church's union, as one in Christ, and the continued presence of the Holy Ghost upon earth as the power of the church's union and edification; together with its heavenly calling, and also the power of its blessed hope, as "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The principles on which the Lord is gathering out his children extensively at this time are incontrovertible. There may be weakness in those who are gathered, and but too little manifestation of the practical power of their union and hopes, in a walk separate from the evil that is in the world, but the principles themselves cannot be set aside. They are God's principles, and a responsibility is in consequence thrown upon every child of God in relation to them. It is an easy thing to speak of this blessed work of God's Spirit in thus gathering his saints together as the setting up of a new sect; but this does not set aside the truth of God on

which they are being gathered. This may be deemed presumption, but if it be, the word of God is nigh at hand, by which it may be subjected to an infallible test. And it is to my own soul a matter of unspeakable joy that I have nothing to urge "of men," nor any opinion to sustain that is of men. My judgments are not of course infallible; but I desire they may stand or fall by the blessed word of God.

It has been deemed a sufficient answer to the principles I have been attempting to urge upon your consideration, to show that the office of pastor is of permanent institution, and to cite the example of Paul and Barnabas and the commission of Titus, to prove that it is right to ordain to that office. But surely it does not require much argument to establish the fact that there were elders in the apostolic churches, nor that they were ordained, or appointed, in some instances at least, by the apostles; nor that the care of the chief shepherd would not fail to provide pastors for his flock to the end. But it is a wrong assumption that these elders were *independent ministers*, any more than they were *diocesan bishops*, or that Christ's pastors must be conformed to the pattern which our minds have been accustomed to dwell upon. It was the ordination of **ELDERS** in every city that the scriptures present, not the appointment of *one* pastor to *one* congregation; nor were these elders necessarily *preachers* at all; which is almost the only idea of a pastor now. "Let the elders that *rule* well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in *the word and doctrine*." But at this very time liberty of ministry in the church was going on; and the Spirit's rule was given, "As every man hath received the gift so let him minister the same," and "ye may all prophecy one by one that all may learn and all may be comforted." Apollos also in his irregular ministry was passing from church to church; and of the household of Stephanas, who had *ordained themselves to the ministry*, the apostle says to the Corinthians, "submit yourselves unto such, and to *every one that helpeth with us and laboureth*." Helping with the apostle and labouring is that which gives a claim to the subjection of the church, and not appointment by man to office.

But to cite what an apostle did by virtue of his apostolic power, as the warrant for present action, is but simply

gliding into the stream of "apostolic succession;" it is indeed producing apostolic *precedent*, without having settled the question of apostolic *power*. And it is this very assumption that is the proof and the sin of the church's apostasy. It is the attempt to perpetuate by the order of man what was originally—and must ever be—solely by the power of God's Spirit.

"But if christians act thus simply, how will ministers be supported?" This is a difficulty which the unscriptural habits of thought amongst God's children often lead them to urge. And surely there is not a more humbling consideration connected with the present condition of christianity, than that everything connected with the church of God, in which every principle and every ministry should tell of the grace of him, "who though he was rich for our sakes became poor," is measured by the scale of giving and receiving. Nothing surely is so contrary to the spirit of the gospel as stipulation and exaction. And I should be sorry to attempt to show that the exercise of the ministry, on Christ's principles, could go on without at the same time the exercise of faith—although I have before me this remark of an opposer: "with a pastor who from necessity "lives on the Lord," we have great sympathy; one who does so for the sake of "*acting faith*," we either pity as an enthusiast, or despise as an impostor and voluntary beggar." It is a hard thing to take up the cross and to follow Christ; but it is an easy thing for one who has no heart for this, to despise and suspect others by whose conduct his principles are condemned. However, it was the early direction of our Lord to his disciples—"freely ye have received, freely give." This is especially needful in the ministry of the gospel to the world, as nothing perhaps has so weakened the power of the truth upon men's consciences, as the thought of the ministry being exercised as a profession. And as to ministry in the church, the rule is plain—"feed the flock of God that is amongst you, taking the oversight, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." It is quite true that it is a principle maintained in the word that those who are sent forth by the Lord in his service are directed to look to him for a maintenance—"no man goeth a warfare at his own charges;" but never is it in the way of demand on the part of him who ministers, nor in the shape of a fixed

payment, for "the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." In reading 1 Cor. ix. where this subject is treated of, we find the right to support is fully recognised for those who were necessitated to forbear working. The analogy of the law is introduced, and the reasonableness of the thing is pleaded, as it was the only return that could be made, except their prayers, by those who had the consciousness of received grace; and moreover it is declared to be the order of the Lord:—"so hath the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel." (How is it, beloved friends, that this epistle should be received with so much reluctance in its instructions as to the exercise of ministry, and so readily cited as authority when payment for ministry is in question?) But the apostle himself would not use this liberty, for he worked with his own hands, although he would not make his own example in this respect binding upon the consciences of others. Still he desired his example should be followed, as he says to the elders of Ephesus: "I have showed you, that ye so labouring ought to support the weak, &c." In the iv. of Philippians we see the principle exemplified: the apostle was content to receive support when it was pressed upon him; but he refused to use his liberty where it would have been a stumbling-block in the way of his ministry, as at Corinth. He acts not upon the principle of his right to receive, but of the people's privilege to give. "Ye sent once and again to my necessity, not because I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account."

It is often matter of surprise to persons who do not see the importance of *principles*, that the systems should be so unsparingly declared to be evil, which nevertheless have so many good men associated with them, and so much good has been effected through them. It is quite true that to one who rightly estimates the word of God, as his only standard and rule, the example of the most eminent men could never give currency for a moment to that which is marked as error by the testimony of the word; still there is a difficulty, as to *how* it is possible such a thing should be; and that such devotedness and piety should be found in systems so wrong. But it will cease to be strange, if the mind is once led to view Satan as the parent of all error, and to consider the way of his working in the present dispensation. His power cannot

prevent God's mercy in the salvation of souls through the testimony of his grace, for "the sower still goes forth to sow;" but "he can sow tares amongst the wheat;" and indeed can "catch away the good seed out of the heart" where the word is not understood. But one great purpose in the church's gathering in the midst of the world, was to be a separate light held forth continually, by which the evil of the world should be exposed and its condemnation declared. It was to have been a gathered family, separated from the world, and in all its principles, its acknowledged head, its present objects and future hopes, quite contrary to the world: so that the voice of its living testimony should be continually in warning and condemnation to it.

The church's separation now should declare as plainly the world's present condemnation and coming judgment, as the separation of Noah's family into the ark told of the approaching judgment of "the world which then was." It has therefore been the aim of Satan, from the beginning, to narrow this line of separation, and thus to destroy this standing witness of the Lord's expected return. His utmost efforts have been put forth to hide the fact that the world's judgment was passed in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that its condition from that time, until "Christ shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance," has been that of a criminal awaiting the day of his execution. "He that believeth not *is condemned* already"—"now is the judgment of this world." Therefore has he sought in all possible ways to bring God's children into association with the world, as if God's principles were still working there, instead of the sentence of doom being written upon all its works and all its glory. But the world in its grosser characters would only repel the godly from its embrace; so that it has been necessary to use enticements under the guise of philanthropy and benevolence, and varied efforts to ameliorate its condition, in order to effect this junction, as well as by the natural desires of the heart to share in the respect and honors and emoluments of the world. Evil and error in the church have not attained their height by a single leap, but through the gradual advances of successive generations; and connected with each deposit, there has been contrived to associate the sanction of some godly name, as the most fitting means to entangle the souls of God's

children, and to keep them in association with what their consciences and the word of God would otherwise condemn. It is the example of "the Fathers," and the sanctity of their names, that is at this moment being employed by one party in the church of England, so effectually to open the way for a return to all the deadly errors of the church of Rome; and it is the piety and zeal of another party (the evangelical clergy) that alone give the system of the church of England any hold upon the *consciences* of her godly members. Formerly the system had nothing to give it currency in the minds of the awakened, but rather disgusted the soul by the grossness of its corruptions. Now, however, these are either forgotten or tolerated, for the sake of "the wise and good and eloquent men" by whom they are sanctioned. But there is an answer to the very ground of all this difficulty in the case of the apostle Peter at Antioch, recorded in Gal. ii. Here we find the whole weight of the apostle's piety and authority thrown into the scale of error, and the influence of his example carrying away the minds of all the godly Jews that were there, and the apostle Barnabas also: so that the example of even inspired men is not unhesitatingly to be followed. But as the Spirit by the apostle Paul writes: "Be ye followers of us *as we are of Christ*;" since otherwise the example of an apostle might be adduced for the destruction of the very grounds of christianity and the liberty of the gospel of Christ.

There is indeed, beloved friends, at the present moment, a necessity to look well to the ground on which we stand, and to examine whether our position can be maintained amidst the rack and trial of every principle that is coming on. The spirit of popery is rapidly leavening the whole mass of the church of England, and carrying away even the evangelical clergy, for whose sakes, as we have already said, many godly souls have tolerated evils from which otherwise they would have shrunk. The thought of their heart has been amidst the late attacks of the democratic faction; "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it." But in this their souls will be disappointed; for what opposition from without might never have done, corruption from within is most surely effecting. Hitherto one great hindrance to the minds of godly churchmen, groaning under the evils of the Establishment, has been that they could discover nothing much better in the various contending sections of

Dissent; and they have thought themselves reduced to the alternative of maintaining their connexion with the evils their consciences condemned: not seeing that there is still open to them the path of simple obedience and blessing, in meeting two or three in the name of the Lord. Soon, however, there will be no standing at all for a godly conscience in the church of England, nor indeed, beloved friends, amongst yourselves, to one who desires in all things to be subject to the will of Christ, as a citizen of heaven, and a mere sojourner upon earth. It is not a time to be tampering with expediency or resting in the systems of men; but seeking to have the soul, with all its confidence and all its hopes, resting upon the basis of imperishable truth. The voice of God's testimony to the world is now especially—"behold the judge standeth at the door;" and to his slumbering church the cry is gone forth: "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him!" But, alas! while I write I am reminded with pain, how little as a body you have been disposed to regard or to believe that cry. It is, beloved friends, a thing which deeply affects my soul, that the blessed hope of the church's calling is scarcely held by you at all, and that the coming of the Lord in glory is a subject systematically excluded from the instruction of your ministers, and the intermediate state and a spiritual millenium substituted in its stead. It would not be compatible with my present object to enter into the proof from scripture of this blessed hope; but I add that all the objections which are made to it are drawn, not from the scriptures, but either from some real or supposed difficulties connected with the subject, or from some consequences drawn from a mistaken view of the real testimony of the word of God. The one may be summed up in the question of Nicodemus, "how can these things be?" And the other may be met by our Lord's reply to the Sadducees, "ye do err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God."

Ever affectionately yours in the kingdom and
 patience of Jesus Christ,
 W. H. DORMAN.

*Tostock, Woolpit,
 Suffolk, Dec. 28th, 1841.*

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