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FOUR LETTERS

TO THE

CHRISTIANS CALLED "BRETHREN,"

ON THE SUBJECT OF

MINISTRY AND WORSHIP.

BY

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS REES.

SECOND EDITION.

London :

PASSMORE AND ALABASTER, 4, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS;
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FIRST LETTER.

DEAR BRETHREN IN CHRIST,

For a quarter of a century I have been more or less exercised about your mode of worship and ministry, and have conversed and corresponded with some of your prime leaders on that subject. Moreover, I hold so many of your distinctive views on other points, have derived so much spiritual profit from your principal writers—so greatly admired your walk and conversation in the world—barring the dreadful Darby-Newton-Bethesda Schism, and its bitter fruits—that I have lamented my inability to cast in my lot among you in your “gatherings” and ministrations.

Let me now give vent to my long repressed feelings in a letter, not of censure or dispute, but of enquiry on the topics above mentioned.

Your principle of meeting, worship, and ministry, is as follows: Believers in Christ assemble “unto the name of Jesus” around his table, and there, without any previous arrangement, and without any human guide, depend upon the Presidency and immediate prompting of the Holy Ghost for prayer, praise, reading and instruction. He selects, upon the spot, the speaker both in worship and in teaching, and He appoints the *time* for these exercises, as well as for “the breaking of bread.”

Now, I cannot see the least difference between this principle and that of the Society of Friends; but I

do see that their practice is more consistent with it ; for, whereas they repudiate both human arrangement and human composition, you always bring with you a humanly-composed hymn-book, and humanly-composed tunes, an importation which, to my mind, is a clear breach of your principle. Let us look at it a little closely. Here is a volume of sacred poetry, composed by any number of professedly uninspired men, and limited by the arbitration of one or more individuals to so many hymns, and no more—say three, four, or five hundred. Very well, in worship, the Holy Ghost is *bound* to this human arrangement. He cannot go beyond the covers of this book, nor can he choose a metre for which there is no well-known tune. Now, I ask, what, in principle, is the difference between *this* limiting of the Holy Ghost, and confining Him to a pre-arranged discourse ?

Your writers are terribly severe upon the “systems,” as they are called, for interfering with the rule of the Spirit, and precluding the exercise of His gifts ; but “thou that art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes * * * thou, therefore, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself” ? If the Holy Ghost is not “hindered” when He prompts a brother to give out—say the thirty-sixth hymn, long measure—with the composition of which hymn, and the tune to which it must be sung, He had no more to do than in the composition of an ordinary sermon a day or two before meeting—how is He “hindered” when He prompts a brother, at some previous time, to the selection of such-and-such a text, to the cogitation of such-and-such thoughts, and their enunciation on the Lord’s-day ? It appears to me that a Quaker might be justly as severe on this “Babylonish

mixture of human and divine," as your writers are on the "one-man ministry" and the human order of worship. But I may be wrong in this conclusion, and, if so, I shall be glad to be set right.

I repeat it, if your principle is true, your practice in the above respect is false—at least, so it seems to me. But *is* the principle true? *Does* the Holy Ghost preside and prompt, in any meeting, in the sense for which you contend? *Is* He the direct author of speech, or silence, with, or without, hymn-books and Bibles—of praise, prayer, reading, teaching, breaking of bread, or the absence of some, or all of these exercises in any assembly of "Friends" or "Brethren"? One of your leaders, Captain P. H., somewhere speaks with contempt of the idea, that what he calls these "your little doings" should be fathered on the Holy Ghost; not that he repudiates your principle, but censures its abuse. If, however, the principle be untrue—that is, if the Holy Ghost is not more especially present in your meetings, than He is in other assemblies of Christians where human order and arrangement are not disowned, how dreadful the pretension that both your "little" and great "doings" are His "doings," in the peculiar sense to which you lay claim! I have been a worshipper in some of your "gatherings," but I could never discover anything either in the devotions, or the teaching, which distinguished them from those of other Christians who were equally spiritual. On the contrary, I have repeatedly questioned whether the Holy Ghost, there and then, led Brother A. to such a chapter, or Brother B. to such a hymn. I once listened to the reading of a chapter with upwards of seventy verses, without a comment; at another time a hymn was given out for which there was no tune, and I strongly suspect that the Holy Ghost had as

much to do—that is, as little to do—with these selections as he has with a more judicious choice; in other words, I suspect that judgment or inclination, wise or unwise, is the principal guide in all your exercises. But if so, how dreadful the pretence that the Holy Ghost is in your meetings, and is the author of your devotions, as He is nowhere else, and with no other people! I ask again, *is* this principle right? “What meaneth, then, this bleating of the sheep in mine ears?” How is it that your teachers are ex-clergymen—noblemen, gentlemen, and military and naval officers—that is, men of social *status* and education? How is it that none of the working classes lead the way? Surely, since the Holy Ghost is “no respecter of persons”—if He were, indeed, the immediate director and prompter in your assemblies—we should see Him taking as many teachers and guides from the lower “million” as from the “upper ten thousand.” When 1 Cor. xiv. was in full exercise, I cannot conceive that learning or station had any influence on the “gifts.”* Nor can I conceive why, if many of the gifts of that chapter are confessedly withdrawn, they may not *all* be absent; and then what becomes of it as a guide to present worship and ministry?

Of what use would be a rule for “those who run in a race” with their own good sound legs, if it were applied to men who could not walk without crutches? God forbid that I should deny the presence and power of the Spirit in any age of the Christian dispensation. I fully admit that He is the efficient Helper in all true worship and ministry, but I cannot see that He is more peculiarly present with Quakers

* Have not 1 Tim. iii. and Titus i. a lesson for “Brethren,” as well as 1 Cor. xiv.?

and Brethren, than with any other Christians, or that He is more especially active in an *impromptu* address at the Lord's-table than in a prepared sermon in the pulpit. Once more I ask, why should not the Spirit be as much present in the choice of a text, and in the preparation and delivery of a discourse, as in the composition, selection, and chanting of a hymn?

Yet it is for the sake of the special, and I may add, inspired worship and ministry of "the Brethren," that your controversialists summon all other "gatherings" to dissolve, and re-unite on their principles. Well, suppose the summons to be obeyed: let us begin with the 5,000 Christians assembled at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. They are dispersed. Will you tell them how they are to be divided, and subdivided, into fifty separate "gatherings" in fifty different "rooms," under fifty different ministries; or, if you please, let the division be not so manifold, still, will you explain how individual Christians are to determine their choice of an assembly? It appears to me that if the above-named dissolution were to take place, there would be "confusion worse confounded," instead of "God's order." Or, suppose it were possible to join your present "gatherings," with which party must we unite? "The exclusives" or the excluded? How could we decide between their respective claims? Nay, is not this very schism, so deep and deadly, a beacon which warns us to steer wide of a "system" which began with universal fellowship, and has ended in universal excommunication?—which commenced with denouncing every sect, and has terminated by becoming the most exclusive sect of all? Of course, I allude here to "the exclusives," and I appeal to their candour, whether the question is not naturally suggested to other "sects"? Is not this terrible division amongst

“the Brethren” instigated by Satan, but permitted by God—a brand upon pretensions about the Holy Ghost, as hollow as they are high? Is it not a token that there is a screw loose in some of their fundamental principles? But do not misunderstand me; whilst I question your principles, I am not defending those of other Christians. On the contrary, I am far from satisfied with the worship and ministry of “the sects,” but I do not perceive that the remedy against “one-man ministry,” and prescribed worship, is a headless gathering, an any-man ministry, and unarranged devotions. Even under the inspiration of 1 Cor. xiv. there were human judgment and regulation. “The spirit of the prophets was subject to the prophets,” and “all things were done decently, and *in order*,” at least, this is what it ought to have been.

Finally, I have arrived at the conclusion that, whilst your exceptional unworldliness and devotedness are the result of your exceptional study of the Word of God, and your scriptural views of the destinies of the Church and the world, your mortal schism—O that it were not “told in Gath”—is the plague-spot of “Church principles” which are dishonouring to the Holy Ghost.

But I may be all wrong, and I will sincerely thank any of you, if you can and will take up and answer *seriatim*, every one of my objections, and refute them.

I am, dear Brethren,

Your affectionate Brother in Christ,

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS REES.

SECOND LETTER.

DEAR BRETHREN IN THE LORD,

“This second epistle I now write unto you” in the same friendly spirit as the first, to which I have received several replies both in print and in manuscript.

Brethren, these are sifting times, and I desire to be sifted, as well as to sift. Pretences of all sorts are being winnowed, and realities alone will stand the test.

Since my first letter, I have read, and re-read, conversed, and re-conversed a good deal on the question between us, and the result is, that as far as I can see, your views on that question will not stand the scrutiny of Scripture and of fact, neither is there unanimity among you on the points in debate, nor consistency between your avowed principle and your practice; for whilst some of you hold the Quaker principle, that is, impulsive, direct “movings” of the Holy Ghost, without any preparation or premeditation, in every act of worship and ministry, others of you repudiate it; and under the phraseology of “open ministry” and “open worship,” guided and governed by the Holy Ghost, allow the exercise of judgment and forethought, and the previous selection of hymns and topics of address; and all of you *act* as if you guided and controlled the Spirit, instead of the Spirit guiding and controlling you. I was much impressed with this inconsistency at Freemasons’

Hall, where the meetings began without any human "president," and with the announcement that there would be "no attempt to manage them," because that office would be left to the Spirit; and yet the chief speakers took their seats where the chief speakers of any other meetings would have taken them, around the table at the top of the room, evidently for the reason that they expected—if they were not prepared—to address the assembly. At the Dublin meetings, on the contrary, there were two human presidents, and previously selected speakers, rightly so I judge, but not consistently with the principle that the Holy Ghost directly governs all.

As to the lack of unanimity referred to, the Freemasons' Hall Meetings were left absolutely open, because they were supposed to be held "in the name of Jesus"; and yet one leading Brother there declared that they were *not* held in the name of Jesus, but "in the name of the tickets of admission"; whilst another leader stood up, and interrupted a well-known speaker, as introducing controversy. Which of these was guided by the Holy Ghost? A third venerable teacher occupied such an unreasonable portion of time in his address, that a fourth equally able and respected, sitting beside me, whispered, "It is unfair [I thought so too], but it is always his way"; and yet the principle of both is to submit to the dictation of the Spirit. Certainly here was an attempt to "manage" the meeting, and it would have been well had there been an acknowledged human management, instead of the pretended management of the Holy Ghost.

Nor is it an uncommon thing, at such meetings, to see several rise at once, either to speak or pray, and who will affirm that one is guided by the Spirit, and the rest not? I am persuaded they are *all* equally

guided by *themselves*; nor would they be to blame if they did not each credit the Holy Ghost with their movements. The plain fact is, that whatever evil there may be in the ordinary "system" of arrangement, is fairly counterbalanced by the opposite plan—or rather, no plan—if the one "hinders the Spirit," the other *helps the flesh*, though, for my part, I deny that it "hinders the Spirit," to exercise a certain measure of precaution, and to prescribe a certain amount of order. One leader, indeed, at Freemasons' Hall, very rashly, as I think, declared that "God's disorder was better than man's order;" but I deny that disorder proceeds from God, though it may be fastened on him. The true author of it is man, misguided by a false principle; so that, in reference to the disorderly meetings of Brethren, it would be much more to the point to say, "Man's order is better than man's disorder." If this should seem severe, "brethren" must recollect that their "system" *invites* severity by its severity towards others; for example, when I put the question at the Hall, whether those Christians who met without open ministry, met in the name of Jesus, after a little silence, one brother stepped to the front, and replied, "No; let us never give up our principle on that point"; nor was there any public protest against this answer, though, after the meeting, several brethren expressed to me their dissent; and on my return home, John E. Howard, Esq., of Tottenham, wrote to me as follows:—

"I protest against the assumption, in which I seemed to be involved at the late meetings, that only those who meet with recognition of open ministry meet in the name of the Lord Jesus."

According to this "exclusive" decree, to which the silence of the assembly gave consent, Jesus is not

“in the midst” of any meeting of Christians, except those of “the Brethren.” Now, whether this be true or false, it is a most solemn and serious conclusion, and, as such, demands the strictest investigation.

I now proceed to give documentary proof of the variety of principles—I may almost say the looseness of principles—and inconsistency of practice amongst you, in relation to ministry and worship. I first give a few extracts from pamphlets written by “brethren,” which I have selected from a valuable book, entitled, “The Church of Old;” London: Bateman and Co., Paternoster-row.

“I assuredly believe that to hinder *any movement of the Spirit* when the saints come together into one place, or to *tie down that movement* to any defined system in our thoughts, is to “*quench the Spirit and despise prophesying*, and to reject that profit which the Holy Ghost provides for the saints, through his manifestation and teaching in the assembled body.”—*Lord's Supper and Ministry*, p. 6.

Yet “the Brethren,” as I showed in my first letter, “tie down the Spirit's movements” in united song, to a “defined” number of humanly composed hymns and tunes.

By the way, a question put to me by one of the “Brethren” in the Hall, plainly discloses that the above view of ministry and worship is still held by him; for, said he, “If I came to Sunderland, and entered your place of worship, and the Spirit moved me to speak or pray, should I be allowed to do so?” My answer is, I do not believe in any such “movements.” I believe that in worship and ministry, we act by the Spirit, *if we have got the Spirit*, not the Spirit by us. See 1 Cor. xiv. 32; Jude 20.

Again, the speaker is no less a personage than Mr. Darby:—

“If God is there, is he not to make his presence known? If he do, it is a *manifestation of the Spirit in the individual who*

acts; it is a gift, and if you please, an IMPULSE. It is God ACTING, that is the great point."—*Remarks on the presence and operation of the Spirit.*

On this, the author of "The Church of Old," comments :—

"So then, if a brother rightly gives out a hymn, it is a *manifestation of the Spirit. It is God's manifested acting.* I boldly testify that it would be difficult to find greater deadness and heaviness, than I have found in the meetings of those who trumpet forth this, as the only means to attain an edifying assembly and a flourishing Church."

Again :—

"Where are the men who in *preaching* depend simply and entirely on the Holy Spirit to *bring to their remembrance*, and enable them to give forth Scripture appropriate to the occasion, and trusting to *Him to use it as such, as he pleases.* When there were few to hear, the Brethren began, perhaps to form their present circle by testimony, *the result of leaning on the Spirit.* But now that their circle is formed around, the flesh will argue and plead; I say the flesh, for what else is it? *unless it be Satan,* which, when a man has spoken in the power of the Spirit with great effects following, can say, '*Now, go and prepare yourself for the next discourse,*' he knew from the first, no preparation, save faith and a little prayer *perhaps.*"—*Testimony of a Saint*, p. 8.

To proceed :—

"Mr. Newton said, that before coming to the Lord's table he did not see it at all wrong *to be prepared with what he had to say to the saints.* This, beloved friends, *shocked me much,* very much at the time, and *shook my confidence;* but oh, with what humiliation I now appear in the presence of God for having so long retained in my bosom the knowledge that our poor brother *did practically deny the present teachings and guidance of the Holy Ghost.*"—*Haffner to the Brethren at East Coker*, pp. 5, 6.

Again :—

"The idea or article of faith among the Brethren is, that coming together simply as Christians . . . they acknowledge the Holy Spirit as personally present, and their forms and manner of worship proceed on the supposition that the Holy Spirit guides and empowers them to speak, pray, etc., at the time;

and if these opinions were rejected or resisted, I do not think the rejection would be either respected or tolerated."—*P. F. H. Unity*, p. 21.

Once more :—

"Alas! for the man whose self-will chooses to give out a hymn, or to pray, or to read a Scripture without the guidance of the Spirit. In doing these things in the assembly of the saints, he is professing to be moved and guided by the Holy Ghost."—*Ministry in the Word*, p. 3.

I might multiply extracts to the same effect, so that when in my first letter I laid down your principle of meeting, worship, and ministry as follows, I did not misrepresent it :—

"Believers in Christ, assemble 'unto the name of Jesus' around his table, and there, without any previous arrangement, and without any human guide, depend upon the presidency, and immediate prompting of the Holy Ghost for prayer, praise, reading, and instruction. He selects, upon the spot, the speaker, both in worship and in teaching, and he appoints the time for these exercises as well as for the breaking of bread."

Yet, in several answers to the said letter, this principle is repudiated, and instead of Quakerism, a sort of modified Quakerism is asserted, which is new to me, for both from the writings and sayings of original and accredited Brethren, I have always understood their principle to be what I have stated above. From a friend who knows Brethrenism well, I learned the following fact, which I give in the writer's own words :—

"John Foster, the essayist, was once asked whether he had ever heard the Brethren preach. His reply was, 'I never go to hear men that are inspired.'"

This shows the general estimate of the assumption of those we are speaking about.

But more—an intelligent ex-clergyman once said to me, 'I thought the Brethren, alluding to Newton and Darby especially, spoke by inspiration, until I heard them misquote Scripture ;' and one person was mercifully kept from going all lengths with J. N. D., by the simple remembrance of a prophecy which

was ventured by him about Bethesda, and which was never accomplished. Deut. xviii. 21, 22.”

By the way, I remember that Mr. Robert Baxter, of Doncaster, was delivered from his possessing spirit by the same means, namely, the non-fulfilment of a prediction.

But now to the replies referred to. Brother —, in a manuscript forwarded to me, writes as follows :—

“ Mr. Rees seems to me to ‘ father ’ upon the Brethren *doctrines* they are innocent of :—

1. They do not hold, so far as I know, that to prepare beforehand a discourse, and deliver the same before a congregation of believers, is of necessity a hindering of the Spirit. For myself I would say that truth will be adhered to there at the Lord’s Supper by the delivery of such an address, provided it is in harmony with the mind of the Spirit, and to the need of the meeting at the time, and provided I hold myself free to lay it aside [then the Spirit did not ‘ prepare ’ it], and speak on any other matter which at the time may appear to my spiritual judgment more suitable.
2. If any assembly limited themselves in their praises to a hymn book, or held the Spirit of God ‘ bound ’ by it, I should condemn it ; but do ‘ the Brethren ’ ? No. For (!) I have never, to my knowledge, been at one of their meetings where I did not also, besides hymns, hear praise expressed in praise not pre-conceived.”

I must say I marvel at this. The question is about *congregational* singing of “ pre-conceived ” hymns and pre-composed tunes, and I argue that if this be right, pre-composed addresses cannot be wrong, whereas this writer shifts the ground to *individual* and unchanted “ *praise*.”

3. “ I agree with Mr. Rees, that judgment or inclination generally direct those who take part. I hold it right, and prefer it should be so : I look for no miraculous interference of the Spirit in our assemblies to direct the speakers or prayers, but believe he gives a spiritual ‘ judgment,’ and a spiritual ‘ inclination ’ to those who are habitually subject to him, which serves

to guide them what to say, and when to say it in the assemblies of the Saints. [And yet it often happens that several Brethren are on their feet together, either to 'speak' or 'pray.' Which of these does the Spirit guide, what to say, 'and when to say it?' Compare this with the extract from *Haffner to the Brethren at East Coker*]

4. "On this account [!] I agree with Mr. Rees that any doctrine of the Spirit which would lead to leveling social distinctions, and equalising the educated and those not so, the strong and the weak, etc., would be a mistake. The leaders are *rightly* the learned and educated, and the theory is *wrong* which would make those not so equally eligible to the post [!]
5. "I most strongly condemn what he says about 1 Cor. xiv. None of the gifts there mentioned are gone, except that which Paul depreciates, namely, 'tongues' [!!!], and his setting aside of the chapter as a guide to the conduct of meetings cannot be too strongly lamented.

"None of the gifts," says this Brother, "are gone, except tongues." Can I believe my eyes when I read this assertion? I need not speak of the "gift of interpretation," but I wonder how our Brother could write thus, in the face of the following words:—

"If all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, *he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest*, and so, falling down on his face *he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.*"

Brethren, have "you the gift of prophecy, in *this sense?*" See too verses 26—36.*

A second respondent writes as follows:—

"The name in which we meet is not 'Jesus,' but the 'Lord Jesus Christ.'" See 1 Cor. v. 4.

I deny the alleged connection between the two

* My friend, Mr. Bland of Plymouth, writes to me in the same strain; he says, "I am glad of the publication of your letter, for it gives the opportunity of repudiating principles which are ascribed to us, but *which we do not hold.*"

passages, though I do *not* deny that Christians meet in the name of the "Lord Jesus," the distinction is without a difference. Again :—

"Matthew xviii. 20, refers not to the *object* for which, but the *ground* or *principle upon which*, the two or three are gathered."

I deny this too, and affirm that the whole passage in verses 19 and 20, refers both to the "object" and the "ground" of meeting, for the meeting "*for*" prayer, and the promise is, an answer to symphonious petitions "in the name of Jesus." To proceed :—

"The promise, 'there am I in the midst,' is a promise with a precedent condition, and that condition must be fulfilled before it can be claimed 'In my name' implies this, at least, that that name is the sanction and authority for coming together, and, 'there am I in the midst,' implies something more than the enjoyment as we may have it in preaching the Gospel, or in our daily life. Moreover, as the context shows, it has to do not only with blessing, but with authority too. The Church was gathered at the beginning round Christ as *Lord*, gathered in his name."

Was that all? Was it not gathered round him as *Saviour* too? What means the Lord's supper as the centre of gathering?

"The promise of Matthew xviii. was prior to the foundation of the Church, and therefore [!] is independent of its failure, and it stands for us to-day, wherever two or three (though in the midst of an Apostate Church) are gathered in his name, gathered on the true ground of the Church; and he will be in the midst in *the same sense*, and *just as he was*, in the midst of the Church, in its pristine perfection." [!]

It is easy to perceive what all this implies, namely, that none but "Brethren" meet in the name of the Lord Jesus, and that none but "Brethren" have him in their midst, which is precisely the answer that was given to my question in Freemasons' Hall; but see Mr. Dorman's answer to this answer in the extracts below. Again :—

“On a question of truth, I admit no *appeal* from Scripture, and least of all, to our observation of the way others act upon it. But we may set to our seals that it is true, and there are some, at least, whose experience will lead them to testify that this truth does not *seem* more true than they themselves have found it to be.”

I should judge that this brother is a novice in Brethrenism; for, compare his experience on this point with that of the fathers of the system given further on. Again:—

“The writer asks, Why should not the Spirit be as much present in the choice of a text, &c., as in the selection and chanting of a hymn? I answer, Why not? I know no reason.”

But “the writer” asked no such question. The *most important* words in his enquiry are here, not without reason, *omitted*. What he *did* ask was this:—

“Why should not the Spirit be as much present in the choice of a text, and in THE PREPARATION AND DELIVERY OF A DISCOURSE, as in the COMPOSITION, selection, and chanting of a hymn?”

Now, let my respondent answer, “Why not? I know no reason,” and he concedes the point in dispute!

Once more, and *this* is the main reason why I quote him:—

“The notion that God inspires any one to speak and pray, in the sense in which the Quakers profess to believe, and as *Mr. Rees* supposes the *Brethren* to believe, I regard as mere fanaticism, or at least as an open door to it.”

Might I not say with equal truth and point, I regard the Brethren’s views of open ministry, on the ground of making room for the Spirit, as “an open door” to what P. F. H. calls “carnal liberties,” producing “agony,” what my respondent terms “feeble talk and license,” and what even the most popular

man among the "exclusives" denominates "popping up on all occasions, and worrying us with their empty twaddle, and tiresome rhodomontade"—quite as bad, I should think, as "mere fanaticism."

Lastly, all that this writer says about hymn books will be answered in my reply to Mr. Groves, because both defend them on the same grounds.

Our dear brother Groves writes as follows:—

"All that prevents the free action of the Spirit of God among us individually and collectively, hinders our enjoyment of his presence, and prevents his bearing testimony to us and to our worship. It is this that makes the difference between the presence of the Spirit in one assembly and another, be that assembly Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist, Brethren so-called, or any other. *It is not the principles* we hold, but the life and the walk we maintain in communion with God *that makes the difference* in the eye of the Searcher of all hearts between one and another, and he is no respecter of persons."—11 pp. 1, 2.

The previous respondent says exactly the reverse:—

"With the *practice* of Brethren, I am not concerned, but with their *principles*."

Again, hear Mr. Groves:—

"While thus walking we *shall make no comparisons* between ourselves and others—we *shall claim no position of exclusiveness*, content that the Lord show who please him most by the present manifestations of his favour, waiting till 'all shall be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ.'"—p. 2.

How different this from the denial that any Christians meet in the name of Jesus, but the open-ministry Brethren! Again:—

"Yet is gift not to be assumed, all has to be proved, and *when proved let it be exercised by him*, 'who is found blameless' in life and in doctrine." 1 Tim. iii. 10.—p. 3. [Exactly so.]

Further:—

"The teacher speaks not necessarily *under a direct impulse* from the Spirit of God, but as taught and trained of God, and led rightly to estimate time and place, he exercises on his

responsibility to God, the gift which he has received. The fourteenth of first Corinthians is often referred to in this matter without due regard to the different character of the gifts already alluded to, and which it is essential to bear in mind, if we would not fall into the error of assuming *that we have miraculous gifts now*; and *acting on that delusion*, apply to teaching and ministry generally as found now in the Church, principles which are *utterly inapplicable*. Let us not lay claim to a power which, if possessed, would be proved as in the apostolic time, in 'miracles,' 'gifts of healing,' &c."—p. 4. [Exactly so.]

To proceed:—

"Let the saints of God wait patiently on the Lord and lovingly *one on another*, and each will find his place, and each will be encouraged to fill it."—p. 5.

What is the meaning of waiting "one on another"?
Again:—

"There is the discharge of much ministry in the church for which *particular preparation* is doubtless needful; but there is also much in which we have to be on our guard, lest we hinder the operations of the Spirit of God." p. 7.

Lastly, on the subject of united singing:—

"The soul . . . has its own specialities and requirements, and *hence our hymn books*, which *as well as our Bibles*, become a necessary adjunct to our worship. *If we sing*, we need tunes, and tunes need metre; these are all natural, for harmony of sound belongs to our natural organisation, forming no part of our spiritual being, yet over which the spirit must have rule, or we fall into the sensuousness of the external or the intellectual. Our hymns ought to be Scripture truths taken from the Word, *put to verse* for the purpose of being sung, and as such the choice of a hymn is *little more* than the selection of a chapter of the Word would be; and *hence the inference* drawn from the use of "a humanly composed hymn book," as justifying the limitation of ministry to a humanly composed sermon, *does not hold good*; and because the Holy Ghost is bound to human arrangements in that, which, like singing, is purely human, is the Spirit bound to such arrangements in that which is *purely spiritual*, as is the ministry of the Word?"—p. 6.

This paragraph, dear brother Groves, is hardly worthy of your logic. At least, I can see no connection

whatever between its premises and its conclusions. Moreover, some of the premises I deny. "The soul has," &c.—and hence our hymn books, "as well as our Bibles." Why the one follows the other I cannot perceive; and to say that "hymn books" are as "necessary" as Bibles to our worship is rather a rash statement. Again—"Hence the inference drawn from the use of a humanly composed hymn book," &c., is a *non sequitur*.

Again: to say that "the ministry of the Word is purely spiritual, while singing is purely human," is a *petitio principii*—which I deny. On the contrary, I affirm that the more spiritual of the two is the singing, as it ought to be, because it is directly addressed to God, whereas ministry is addressed to men.

Once more: "If we sing, we need tunes, and tunes need metre"—that is, we need *uninspired* tunes and verses—but I deny that we have any precedent in the New Testament for *this* sort of singing, and I maintain what I have asserted all along, that restriction in ministry is no more a hindrance to the Spirit than restriction in uninspired and prepared hymns and tunes. My respondent, No. 2, does, indeed, refer to Col. iii. 16, Acts xvi. 25—(which is *not* congregational) 1 Cor. xiv. 15, 26. But I deny that this singing was either united or uninspired. I agree with the author of "The Church of Old," that "these were *individual* exercises, the words and the music being both given by *inspiration*."—p. 122.

The logical result, then, appears inevitable, namely, to use Mr. Bland's expression at the Hall—to "tear off the plaster." Either, to be consistent with your principles, you must go over to Quakerism, or you must change your principles to agree with your practice.

That I am not singular in this criticism of my

respondents, will appear to the reader, if I here insert the judgment on their letters, of a most experienced "Brother" :—

"I thought your 'friendly letter' most valuable as an appeal to the consistency of those who advance such claims to the exclusive guidance of the Spirit—though it did not appear to me that you attempted to expound the doctrine, in all its extent in Scripture, as assumed in one or two of these rejoinders. About Mr. Groves's affair I literally can say nothing. He so runs on as never to *see* even the difficulty he professes to deal with. The whole of his remarks amount to this—If things in regard to truth, and obedience, and subjection to the Lord and his word, were right—why they would be right! The other two respondents seem to me to mistake your point. You did not I think reason from the use of a hymn book in worship to 'a one-man ministry,' but to a pre-composed discourse as being in the same category as a pre-composed hymn. And your conclusion was, if the one be compatible with the guidance of the Spirit, so is the other."

Exactly so.

"Each writer seems to look at the question simply from his own point of view, but neither gives the exponent of what is held on the subjects by the Brethren.

"As to speaking or preaching it is insisted on by the highest authority among them that i. Pet. iv. 11, is the rule. 'If any man speak—as "*Oracles of God*"—*εἰ τις λαλεῖ, ὡς λόγια Θεοῦ*—'as delivering oracles.' Alas! for the *practice* if this be the rule."

Again—

"I notice that your respondents mix up the question of the Church and its constitution with that of ministry, which is your subject. Of course the constitution of 'the Society of Friends' is open to the objection that, in process of time, it may become a society of merely natural men, since membership *by birth* is a fundamental principle. But this does not affect their theory of *ministry*, which is that of direct inspiration. *And so is that of the Brethren.*"

I thought so too, until my "friendly letter" brought forth a repudiation of this theory.

But, whatever the variety of your principles, you all agree to ground them on Matthew xviii. 20,

Ephes. iv., Rom. xii., and 1 Cor. xii. and xiv. Now, it will save me trouble, and have more weight with you, if a venerable and honoured member of your own body, who adopted your principles a quarter of a century ago, and has practised them from that time to within the last two or three years—be allowed to speak on your proof texts. I refer to Mr. W. H. Dorman, from whose recent letters to Mr. Harris, I give the following extracts :—

“ *All that is divinely linked with meeting in the name of the Lord Jesus is his presence, and the answer to prayer when so presented. So that the order of an assembly, and ministry, and discipline, and government must, if attempted, literally be carried on without authority, and without any divine sanction, if there be no other ground for it than is supplied by meeting in Christ's name.*”—*Letter III., p. 5.*

“ The very liberty of ministry, of which the author boasts as being God's order and not man's, where is the warrant for it? or where are the rules for its exercise, except in the twelfth and fourteenth chapters of Corinthians? And is it not certain that this writer would make his appeal to this authority if pressed upon the subject, and not, as he speaks, to ‘ the all-sufficiency of the name of Jesus ’? ”—*Ibid., p. 6.*

“ But let our writer now show the practical effect of the rule of God in the assembly, and the order of Christ in his own house. In p. 29 he says, Alas! alas! we often see men on their feet in our assemblies [it is ‘ our assemblies ’ now] whom common sense, to say nothing of spirituality, would keep in their seats. We have often sat and gazed in astonishment at some whom we have heard attempting to minister in the assembly. [It is “ the assembly ” now, though we have not shifted our place.] We have often thought that the assembly has been looked upon by a certain class of ignorant men, fond of hearing themselves talk, as a sphere in which they might easily figure without the pains of school and college work.”—*Ibid., p. 10.*

“ This makes all the difference.” [p. 29.] “ In this he is mistaken. It makes no difference, except to make it worse, when practical evil is associated with Christ's name, and borne with on the plea of the abstract excellence of the system which produces it. But perhaps he will listen to another's sentiments on the point more readily than to mine. In reply to the objection that if an ecclesiastical system is theoretically correct, ‘ the

actual evil is no ground to go upon. Mr. J. N. Darby thus writes : 'Christians will often find themselves in strange situations who disregard actual evil on the assumption that the system which produces it is theoretically correct ; for in this manner there may be no limit to the measure of practical wickedness that may be tolerated, while conscience satisfies itself on the plea of an abstract excellence which may turn out to be a mere *shadow or worse*. Such, however, is not the path of sound Christian principle, which at once pronounces that the actual evil *is* the ground to go upon : God acts upon it, *even though the system be his own.*'—*Christian Witness*, 1834. *Letter III.* p. 12.

"What is this but the most solemn trifling with Christ's name, under the vain pretence of exalting it? And what could lead a grave man like the writer of this book to run so utterly athwart the testimony of Scripture on the subject he is treating of, but that he has adopted a *human system as his guide, and not Scripture?*"—*Ibid.*, p. 9.

"The rest will *I set in order* [διαταξομαι] when I come? Was Christ's 'presidency of the assembly,' as it is degradingly called, and which I shall have to notice, less in the days of the apostles than now? Or did the apostle interfere with Christ's rule in his own house when thus directing everything relating to its order, communion, ministry, etc.? or did the pastors and teachers of Ephesians iv. interfere with it in the execution of their office and function?"—*Ibid.*, p. 9.

"But so full is the writer of his notions, and so convinced of the truth of his imaginings, that he puts this language into the mouth of an objector, 'Without some human presidency. . . . should we not have men **POPPING UP ON ALL OCCASIONS, AND WORRYING US WITH THEIR EMPTY TWADDLE AND TIRESOME RHODOMONTADE?**' This, be it noticed, he answers, not by any appeal to the Scripture directions in such a case, but by simply asserting 'Jesus is all-sufficient. We can trust him to keep order in his house.'

"This is a specimen of what I have termed '*the wantonness of assertion.*' For who does not at once ask, What were the epistles of Timothy and Titus written for? Had they nothing to do with the order of God's house? Does not the apostle say to Timothy, 'These things I write unto thee . . . that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God'?"—*Ibid.*, p. 8.

"And what of the gifts of Christ's bestowment, as Head of the body, for its edification, when it is said, '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? Ephes. iv. Were not these gifts *men*? And were they not set up in that which professed to be *the assembly*? And could it not then have been said, as now, 'If Christ be in our midst, we can count upon him for everything'? But was the church then guilty of such folly? No. It knew how to distinguish between men who were in grace the mediate *expression* of Christ's authority, and the *source* of that authority which appointed them to the exercise of these functions. But in our author's theory there is no authority, human or divine. It is simply 'every man doing that which is right in his own eyes.' For it is certain that neither 'the order of an assembly,' nor 'ministry,' nor 'discipline,' nor 'government,' is connected with meeting in Christ's name.'—*Ibid.*, iii. p.

"In rejecting the validity of human appointment to office and ministry in the Church, it is plain to me that in the *system of the Brethren* there has been a rejection also of the appointments of Christ for the edification of his body."—*Letter VI.*, p. 18.

"Moreover, let me say, that those who reject, or refuse to acknowledge, the *επισκοπος* (bishop or elder) of the New Testament, refuse the appointment of Christ. If Christ makes men 'bishops' or overseers, it is plain that the ecclesiastical system, which *on principle* shuts them out, is *not of God*. This is a question altogether apart from that human appointment or human authority."—*Ibid.*, p. 18.

"If it be asked here, as it may well be, What is the possible remedy for this state of things? I answer, Certainly not in proposing some new theory of 'the church,' and still less in taking refuge in a system of abstractions which pretends to lift above the actual state of things. The only remedy, as it appears to me, is to return to that 'liberty wherewith Christ has made us free,' and while accepting the position in which our sin and folly have placed us, to turn to the Lord as our only help.

"A true value for the cross, and heart-subjection to the authority of the Lord who hung upon it, will not leave the faithful humble soul without a resource. The first effect of this will be to rescue from their misuse and misapplication the words of the Lord Jesus—'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' For if all else has failed, Christ has not failed.

"It was the early practical departure from this simple ground of Christian worship that laid the foundation for all the

subsequent superstructure of conceit, and folly, and supercilious contempt for other Christians, that has been built upon it. *This* as to the ground of Christian *worship*. The *question of ministry and edification is distinct from this, though plainly presented in Scripture*.

“If it be a question of rule, or order, or ministry, or organisation, though Matthew xviii. *gives no light* on these subjects, I think that the New Testament is plain as to all that the Lord Jesus Christ has ordained to that end.

“It is exactly here that *the system of the Brethren* has failed, in common with all other existing systems. *It does not conform to the apostolic model.*”—*Ibid.*, vi. p. 15.

“I have always felt and maintained that the whole strength of the Brethren lay in their *negative principles*. The moment they attempted to bring forward that which was positive they became ‘weak as other men.’ For, in truth, this is the point of difficulty; and it will never be met by theories or systems. It might possibly, in the Lord’s pitifulness, if there were a heart to enquire of him for a solution, and humility enough to confess how utterly all had come short. It has been easy enough to denounce a ‘one-man-ministry;’ but it is very questionable whether this has been mended by a ‘no-man-ministry.’ And though our author has spoken about ‘divinely-taught teachers,’ and ‘divinely-gifted pastors,’ in the assembly, he has forgotten that he has only had experience of those who, if indeed they are so, *made the system*, and not of those which *the system has made*, except it be in the unfortunate persons who are described by him as ‘fond of hearing themselves talk,’ and fancying the assembly to be ‘a sphere in which they might easily figure without the pains of school and college work.’

“That there are divinely-gifted men amongst them I do not doubt, as there are also elsewhere; but then they were divinely-gifted as clergymen and ministers of other denominations, before they were connected with this exclusive church; and almost all besides are persons who have had at least the advantage of a collegiate training, apart from the body in which they have subsequently ministered. *Of those that have been formed by the system, I would rather not say anything, although godliness and earnestness will always be in their measure owned by the Lord.*

“As to anything like divinely-authenticated ministry, with all their boastful claims, *the brethren have no superiority over other Christians*; and in regard to rule and order, it will appear to every one competent to form a judgment that *they are inferior to most*, because they have rejected human order, and have not substituted in its place that which is divine.

"I will not, however, pursue this matter any further, but would commend to the attention of those whom it concerns the very temperate and Christian letter of Mr. Rees, of Sunderland, to the Brethren, on the question of their claims to the exclusive possession of the Spirit in their worship and ministry."—*Ibid.*, pp. 21—23.

"As to any notion of producing union amongst Christians by such means, the very thought of it makes one blush. No religious movement, perhaps, ever so thoroughly succeeded in defeating its own object."—*Ibid.*, p. 21.

So far, Mr. Dorman. No doubt his six letters are directed primarily against the "Exclusive Brethren;" but the extracts I have given apply equally to what he calls repeatedly, "*the system of the Brethren,*" which, of course, includes both parties.

Next, hear another witness, found among "the Brethren," of equal standing and respectability with Mr. Dorman; viz., P.F.H., in his Tract on "Unity, a Fragment, and a Dialogue. A.D., 1851."*

"I am satisfied that any Christian of the sundry parties around us, except the close Baptists, could say, with a bold and free spirit, I meet with my fellow Christians in the name of the Lord Jesus simply; and, though I may limit the operations of the Holy Spirit, as you say, to the minister, as my teacher, and to the others as listeners, yet I fully acknowledge his personal presence, and his power in both; and the difference between us must be found in the application and use of these truths, and not in the truths themselves."—p. 23.

"But here, again, I should only place myself in a dilemma; for if, in using so severe a test or rule, I find faulty principles and practices maintained everywhere, I cannot disguise from myself, that, if I were honest and impartial, I should find our meetings, to be *in a different way, as unscriptural and defective as all the rest.*"—p. 24.

"But without going into detail, which cannot be necessary, I only ask, where have you any distinct offices or order at all? I do not ask, whether you have one elder or many, and so on; but how and where have you recognised and understood offices or spiritual relationships of any kind, beyond that of 'brotherhood'? It may be said, that now is not the time, for them,

* This "brother" gave up rank, and fortune, and everything that is valued in this world, for the sake of what he believed to be the "truth."

and the like ; but this in no way disturbs the assertions I make, that, judging by Scripture, your ways are defective, for you do not doubt their existence in the early Church ; and I add, as my own mind in the matter, that, while to reject men who claim office without spiritual competency, is certainly a duty and doing reverence to the Holy Spirit, it is but going half way in this duty and reverence if we do not, with equal decision, see that competent men, if there are any, are not only in office, but well understood to be so.”—p. 25.

“ Throughout my argument with you, I have implied, when I have not asserted, the difficulty of taking any step whatever in the Church’s present unhappy state ; and if men would speak humbly, and own that things are wrong—that all are wrong in some ways—there would be a wide space for sad and penitential fellowship ; but my trouble is in this, *that you and others quote Scripture*, in its highest descriptions of the Church’s primitive ways, as you say, taking the twelfth and fourteenth of first Corinthians, and apply it with great freedom in proving the defects of others ; but, when it is turned against yourselves, you deny its just application to such days as ours. *If the Bible, in its description of God’s ways in the Church, may be used against others, we ought to judge ourselves by it in the same way.*”—p. 27.

“ In the same way we are obliged to speak of all the different Christian parties. God is good to all in this way ; and thus far all may justly claim his presence—and in the same way, without doubt, we may speak of it. We surely still have it, and that in spite of *our carnal liberties*, as the others have it in spite of their carnal restraints ; but if you wish me to say we now have it in a better and fuller sense, *I can do no such thing*. I have seen in other days, and thankfully remember it, a more deep and extended manifestation of God’s chastening presence, but not for a long time ; of late, in the place of the diverse, yet harmonious expressions of spiritual power, one with a psalm or hymn, another with instruction, another with prayer—alike the unquestionable utterances of true hearts, governed and filled by the same Lord—I have listened, in the town where I have lived, to *little else* (and at times with agony) but to *long, wordy, tedious prayers*, psalms and hymns out of place, and sung deplorably ; false doctrines in teaching, sometimes *confused and pompous*, and therefore solemn in the vulgar—sometimes confounding truth and falsehood together, and almost *all powerless* ; and, alas ! in the main, all alike considered good and to purpose, as long as the actors were *more*

than one; and out and out true to this *principle of liberty of ministry.*"—p. 31.

"I say it with no little sorrow; but we have become as stiff and set as the more ancient forms around us, and we have made haste to become so. We have peculiar principles, and peculiar forms resulting from them, in which we are fast tied and bound—forms indeed which are supposed to be elastic, as dependent on the presence and sovereign dispositions of the Holy Spirit, but which are so far from being so, that in almost every case where the Holy Spirit does not act, *the flesh does for form's sake, and as long as two or three or more persons take a part, instead of one, the principle, as it is called, is not invaded, and all are satisfied, whether the thing done or said be good or bad; whether human vanity, or will, or wickedness, give rise to it, or the Divine afflatus.* It is true, we exercise a vigorous judgment on the neighbouring bodies: we say we meet in the Spirit, and they do not—we give liberty to the Spirit—they limit him, and so on; but when a closer scrutiny is required, and a judgment looked for on the reality or otherwise of the acts which are called spiritual, among ourselves, this is not to be borne; and so, instead of an increase of spiritual gifts, and more Divine power, order, and sanctity, day after day, the fruit of penitence, faith, and an honest and impartial judgment of ourselves, the Spirit is grieved by *carnal liberties* and self-complacency, instead of being, as in other places, quenched by carnal restraints."—p. 29.

"But pray consider that there may be *forms for disorder*—forms which will give shelter to the indulgence of *carnal liberties*, under the name of lofty principle. We, for instance, may maintain the forms, the high and primitive form suited for open ministry, which depends for its value on the *possession* of various gifts; and if we are without many gifts, and abuse those we have, and then substitute *humanities* (and this is a gentle word) to fill up the void and maintain the form, must we not apply to ourselves the same words, "*From such turn away;*" if not, to what does it apply? The truth is, we have capriciously selected a part of the primitive forms, which more depend for their weight on the possession of *primitive* power than any other, and have left the rest on one side."—p. 34.

So far these veteran witnesses, the sum and substance of whose reasoning and testimony is this—that your system of ministry and worship is, *pretension without power*; and in this I concur. I do not deny

that you have power, or that the Quakers have power ; but I deny that, in either case, it is *peculiar* power, and that it corresponds with your pretensions.

“ One of your own prophets,” in a letter to me the other day, remarks :

“ The root of the mischief seems to be this, that men assume to be whatever Scripture says they ought to be ; and as the Holy Spirit *ought* to guide in all things, it is assumed he does so guide.”

Another of “ your own prophets,” who was present at the Freemasons’ Hall Meeting, gives me this caution :

“ I beg you to bear with me, while I entreat you not to forsake a position in which God has so plainly favoured you, in the instruction and care of his people—to pursue an *ignis futuus* of a principle which those who hold it cannot explain—and which, separated as it is, in practice from the divine power properly belonging to it, and from the *divine order*, which alone makes it profitable.

“ I read your letter with great interest, and I confess to wishing, with all the earnestness left to me, after such a life of loss and grief, that a few real men who do not live in a kingdom of word only, would meet in the spirit of Malachi, and test the sad ways of our fellow Christians, and our own, by the Word of God.”

A third eminent “ Brother ” says :

“ The conclusion of your letter *must be deeply pondered, as to its truth*. Is it the absence of rule, or, is it the absence of life, love, communion, and humility, which has caused the scandal ? Or is this to be traced far deeper ? ”

I am aware that junior Brethren regard these experienced seniors with a degree of pity, as “ disappointed men ; ” but the question is *what* has disappointed them ? Was it not the early adoption of wrong principles about the “ Holy Ghost and the Church ”—principles which were sure, sooner or later, to bear the bitter fruits that are now gathered in such abundance, and eaten in such sorrow ? And

here let me observe, that as "false Christs" clustered about the First Advent, so it seems as if false Holy Ghosts were gathering around the Second. I believe that the Montanism of the second century has been revived in tenfold power in these last days. I need not speak of the pretensions of George Fox and his followers: I would rather point to Irvingism with its "gifts and offices;" to Princism, with its incarnate Holy Ghost; to Mormonism, with its miracles; to Spiritualism, with its "seducing spirits;" and to Darbyism, with its "exclusive" pretensions to divine power and order. O, dear Brethren, "suffer the word" of caution. I have heard some of you speak of burdens "laid on their heart" (which is an ambiguous phrase, but designed to *hint* inspiration), burdens, that when laid off their heart, by their tongues, it was a burden to hear. Beware of false Holy Ghosts! Permit me to ask, whether you are not, in principle, imitating the Romish and Anglican Churches in their pretensions to possess bygone power? I refer to "the laying on of hands;" a form which once really did communicate the Holy Ghost, but which, for hundreds of years, as you know, has been "*vox et præterea nihil*," as vain as the well-known boast, "I can call spirits from the vasty deep." But is not your application of the passage, "If any man speak, let him speak as *God's oracles*" to your own ministry, as mistimed, misplaced, and untrue, as the episcopal application of the passage, "Receive the Holy Ghost" to Romish and Anglican ordination?

On this subject I agree with the following words of Olshausen on 1 Cor. xii. 14. "The *Charismatic* form of operation of the Holy Ghost ceased with the third century. . . . It cannot be surprising that we must feel this regret, when we see that

Chrysostom, who lived nearly 1500 years nearer to the apostolic age, expressed himself in just the same manner. In his twenty-ninth homily, speaking of the Corinthian gifts, he says, "τῶν τότε μὲν συμβαλλόντων ἵν' δὲ οὐ γινόμενων." *

Again : "No Christian is without faith, yet all do not possess the *Charisma* of faith * * * * The *Charismata*, without exception, are *miraculous and extraordinary*." If so, what folly it is to talk of "gifted brethren," in the apostolic sense of the expression. Again : "*Charismatically* the Holy Ghost has ceased to work in the Church since the time of the apostles [this is a truer date than that given already]. All, even wisdom and knowledge, must now be gained by gradual exercise ; whilst in the apostolic times it was an immediate consequence of divine operation on the soul."

Yet when we animadvert on the failures of Brethren, not in point of order, for the Corinthians failed in that, but in point of *power*, we are reminded of 1 Cor. xiv. &c., and of "God's principles, which never fail," that is, as I said in my first letter, we are told to apply the same rule to a man who cannot walk without crutches, as to one who is sound in every limb, in which case we should not be surprised to see the crutchless cripple stumbling at every step, and at last bed-ridden with broken bones. And such, alas ! has been the experience of "Brethren," if the testimony of P. F. H. is to be credited. But it will be objected, What then has become of the Holy Ghost as the power of ministry and worship ? I answer that I rejoice to recognise his presence in that capacity, but I deny *charismatic* impulse, inspiration, and endowments ; that is, I deny that there is any ground for *your* mode of ministry and worship, and if I

* "The gifts then subsisting, but *not now*."

admitted such a ground I should still maintain that your hymn-book importations were inconsistent with it.

I allow sanctified natural ability and educational acquirement, and I affirm that this is the sum total which such "gifted" men as C. H. Spurgeon and J. N. Darby possess.

Therefore, the inspirational, and impulsive power of ministry being gone, there must needs be a change of ministerial order. I repudiate, as much as you, the absolutely restricted one-man ministry, and one-man mouthpiece in worship. I abjure all "clerisy," costumes, titles and ordinations, but I demand proved ability, and that when it is proved, it be recognised. I demand too, sanctified human order, preparation, and arrangement. I protest against an everlasting *solo* in the church, but I equally protest against a hubbub of experimental performances in the solemn worship of God on the Lord's-day. "Let the deacons first be proved," and *a fortiori*, the teachers. All I cry out against is, what John Wilkinson says of Quakerism, "A dead sepulchral silence, broken by the first *pretender* to inspiration," or prepared addresses, which are given forth as the *impromptu* teachings of the Holy Ghost.

"I think," says one of the venerable Brethren before referred to, "that your position is correct, viz., that ministry is, if true, by the power of the Holy Spirit; but that this power is not limited to a given form, nor attained by the setting aside of those offices which are patent in the New Testament."

Says another of this trio of witnesses, "The Spirit of Brethrenism was well uttered in that dreadful sentence you quote, as recently delivered in Freemasons' Hall, namely, 'that none meet in the name of Jesus who do not allow open ministry,' but such impiety is put to the credit of Divine truth."

Once more, dear Brethren, give ear, on the subject of your proof-texts before cited, to the words of the author of "The Church of Old," a former fellow of Oxford, but now an ex-clergyman, and a learned and voluminous writer on the Word of God :—

"Brethren! Will you account me your enemy if I tell you the truth, or that which seems to me to be so? Whether you will listen or refuse, or whether you will regard the suggestions with suspicion, as those of a foe; or with honest simplicity, as the testimony of one who wishes well to the cause of Christ, they shall with God's help be set before you. It may be that some will be candid enough to weigh, where many condemn with a glance, because the statements accord not with their prepossessions.

"First, then, let us inquire into the place which the blessed Spirit of God holds in the Church of Christ. We are agreed as to his agency in conversion and sanctification; his indwelling in the believer; his being the author and prompter of whatever is said and done rightly among the saints. But your gathering-cry, 'The Holy Ghost in the Church,' is ambiguous, and pressed to consequences it will not sustain. It may mean (1) the Holy Spirit's *abiding* with the *universal Church*, framing and imparting unity to it as the body and bride of Christ. In this sense it is a Scripture truth. (2) But it is often taken to signify the especial presence of the Holy Ghost in the midst of certain saints met for worship. In this sense it is denied. The promise is, the presence of **JESUS IN THE MIDST** of those met in his name, 'For where two or three are gathered unto (*εἰς*) my name, **THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM :**' Matt. xviii. 20. '*Lo, I am with you* all the days, unto the end of the age : ' Matt. xxviii. 20. Will you now, by dint of inference, conclude that this must mean the presence of *the Holy Ghost*? I might speak strongly on this point; but I will content myself with saying, pardon me if I distrust logic on this mysterious topic of the Divine nature. I rest on the promised presence of *Jesus*; I can advance no farther. You would once have gone no farther yourselves.

"Again, you hold that the Holy Spirit is the President of the meeting of the saints for worship. I have never seen this proved. In chapter xiv. which offers to our notice the gifts in relation to the assembly, or the Christian Church in its ministry and worship, the Holy Spirit (remarkable to tell) is not once named; while in the twelfth chapter, which describes

his place in the church in general he is mentioned eleven times. In the fourteenth chapter, 'God' is mentioned seven times, and 'Lord' twice, but the Spirit not once. Rules for the conduct of worship and edifying ministry are given, but they are declared to come from 'the Lord.' 'The presidency of the Holy Ghost is neither named nor implied once.'—pp. 124, 125.

"We have opened thus the second great question—THE EXISTENCE OF GIFTS. Here we must define. I fully admit natural gifts or abilities. I believe that these are used before faith in the service of Satan; after faith in the service of God; Rom. vi. 19. These are the gifts of *God as Creator*. But in apostolic times, after faith, by the laying on of apostles' hands, new and supernatural faculties were imparted, 'powers of the age to come.' These were the gifts or distributions of the *Holy Ghost, as the Great Agent in the Church of Christ*. They were powers peculiar to the Church. They are set forth in the Epistles to the Corinthians and Ephesians, and these we have not.

"And methinks, the question may summarily be decided. The gifts of the Spirit were MANIFESTATIONS of the Spirit. Those, therefore, who affirm, are called on to supply proof; else simple denial is enough. The proof was ample of old. We read of none who denied them, either among friends or foes. The sceptic might as soon have denied the existence of stars in the night heavens. But we who deny, have been in your assemblies of worship and ministry, and having seen both your assemblies, and those of the Dissenters generally, and Churchmen, profess that nothing more supernatural has appeared there, either in power or knowledge, than may be found among those who confess that we have them not. '*Manifestations*' could not lie hid. They were *self-evident* to the world as well as to the believer."—p. 145.

"Pause, I beseech you. Inspiration of old was communicated sensibly, and in two ways, of which neither is now experienced. God jealously guarded this by sufficient evidence and tests. I beseech you, do not imagine that to be inspiration, which is destitute of the old evidence, and will not answer to those tests. Either you must retrace your steps to the humble confession of ignorance, or before you lies, shall I say, *the delusion of an evil spirit, mistaken for the Holy Ghost?*"—p. 150.

"In concluding this part, I would say, we have neither 'the gift of the Spirit,' nor 'the gifts' of the Spirit, nor 'the gifts' of Christ ascended, nor 'the distributions' of the Holy Ghost.

"The gifts of old were, (1) miraculous, (2) inspired,

infallible, (3) manifestations of the Holy Spirit, (4) imparted, (5) abiding, (6) prophetic, (7) direct revelation, rendering the written word unnecessary, (8) transferable, (9) bestowed after faith, (10) and suddenly after prayer. The powers now possessed have none of these properties or qualities; therefore we have none of the gifts of old; and the difference between us and the saints of apostolic days is one of *kind*, and not of *degree*."—p. 154.

"The assembly was the sphere of gifts of utterance, but those gifts were *permanent, previously manifested, and recognised endowments*. (1) 'The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each.' Could this be said of a transient impression, produced upon me suddenly at unknown times, and dependent on the will of another? No; that which is *given, must be put in my power*. It must be abidingly with me. The Holy Spirit leaves no room for the sudden and momentary visitation of gift to one ungifted. Paul does not suppose that the Spirit might suddenly move one to speak in a tongue in the assembly, who had no knowledge of what he was about to do. No. The apostle deals with persons permanently possessed of tongues, and who had often used them. 'If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the Church.' What does this imply? Clearly, that if there were no one present in the assembly *foreknown as having the permanent gift of translation*, he was to be still."—pp. 155, 156.

"All the five classes in Ephesians iv. are alike persons. But two, somehow, are not thought to exist now, as being miraculous officers. To make this accord with circumstances, one (apostles) is changed into *their writings*: the other (prophets) is lowered into a *subordinate sense*; since it would be hard to prove the existence of any *writings* of New Testament prophets. But the other three are insisted on as being strictly persons, and persons found in the present day as truly as then."—p. 159.

"You lay it down as the first principle of the Christian assembly, (1) that liberty is to be given to the Spirit; (2) that the way to gift and power, as well as the way to please God, is to remove all hindrances to the Spirit's manifestation; (3) that the only rightful minister is the Holy Ghost; (4) who decides the speakers; (5) that who acts in the assembly professes to be guided by the Holy Ghost; (6) that the Holy Spirit takes the responsibility of the *use* of gift as well as of its bestowal; (7) that each is to wait on the Spirit for an impression, or impulse, as his guidance to speak or not; (8) and lastly, that this is THE PRINCIPLE OF MEETING in your gatherings.

"Now, in opposition to these statements, I would observe, first, that never (so far as I am aware), is ministry, when dealt with practically, *viewed from the side of the Spirit*. The reason is clear: because thus responsibility almost entirely ceases. And Paul's object here is throughout to present *responsibility*, not *privilege*.

"Even in the day of inspired and miraculous gift it was not so viewed. And next, your view of privilege is greater than was realised even then; much less is it true now."—pp. 169, 171.

"But let us come next to the EXERCISE OF GIFT.

"As the principles with which you start are mistaken, so are the results.

"*You hold that all preparation, previous to coming into the assembly, is sinful!*

"Where are the men who are, in preaching, depending simply and entirely upon the Holy Spirit to bring to their remembrance and enable them to give forth Scripture appropriate to the occasion, and trusting to him to use it or not, as he pleases?"—*Testimony of a Saint*, p. 8.

"*Yet even when the gifts in their fulness were possessed, this was not the rule.* No: the saints at Corinth came prepared to speak. 'When ye come together, EACH HATH a psalm, HATH a doctrine, HATH a tongue, HATH a revelation, HATH an interpretation:' xiv. 26. Nor does a word of reproof for the sinfulness of such conduct fall from Paul's lips.

"Mr. Haffner confesses sin in suffering such a sentiment to pass without rebuke. Paul passes it by without a hint of the sin. Yet was he as sinful as Haffner, if this principle be true!

"What mischief must follow such presumptuous acting as if we were in possession of what we have not!—pp. 166, 168.

"Your watchword is, '*Liberty to the Spirit!*' The Scripture strain is *principles to guide, and rules to check, inspired men*. Does the Spirit need rules? No, but *men* do; and the fact, that rules are given to men, proves your theory as to the Spirit's charge and responsibility unsound. *Rules without, not feelings within*, are made the ship's compass. It is not, 'The Spirit will take care that but one at a time is moved to speak; but principles, exhortations, commands, are addressed to the possessors of gift, as capable of judging what is for edification, and as put in charge with it by God.

"Paul never affirms that limitation is a sin; but that God is a God of order, and that rules are necessary to maintain it. It is not, that the Spirit's impulse is supreme; but that the gift

is subjected to the prophet's control. He saith never, that the Spirit's incitement to speak is a sacred thing, always to be obeyed; but one class of the gifted is for ever silenced in public. He never teaches implicit submission, on the ground of mysterious motions of the Holy Spirit, and omniscient regulations. He never says, 'It is the Spirit speaking in the tongues, therefore hinder not the utterance. He is inspired; his speaking is God's manifested action, therefore listen uncomplainingly, though you understand not a word.' His tone is quite antagonistic to this. Does he anywhere teach that the Holy Ghost will decide who is to speak, on certain mysterious principles hidden from them? Nay, but he teaches them to decide for themselves, on certain intelligible principles, openly propounded to them. This seems to me clearly to follow from the nature of a gift, and from the responsibility which (as the Saviour teaches, Matt. xxv.) the employment of it entails."—p. 174.

"You pride yourself on having nothing to say ere you meet. Even in the day of manifested gift, pre-possession of the exercise was the ordinary course, sudden revelation during the assembly was the exception; and even then only to a recognised prophet. Cannot the Spirit prepare truth that shall edify, as well out of the assembly as in it? Has he anywhere bound himself to supply truth, only after the meeting is begun?"

"Is edification still the great law of the Christian assembly? Then, not only is previous preparation *lawful*, it is my *DUTY*, if I can better edify the brethren thereby. To lean on what you call 'the present guidance of the Holy Ghost,' as it is *not faith resting on a promise*, but, *presumption founded on mistake*, brings manifested weakness, through *the dishonour done to the Holy Ghost*."—p. 176.

I have already repeatedly said that the principles of Quakerism and Brethrenism, on the subject of ministry and worship, are identical. Take, in proof, the following extract from the Address issued by the Yearly Meeting of Friends in 1841:—

"And seeing that this gift of the Holy Spirit cometh from God only, the ministry ought not, in our apprehension, to be performed at stated times of human appointment, neither *ought there to be any previous preparation by the minister, of matter to be communicated by him to an audience*, when met for the purpose of performing the solemn duty of worship unto God. But it

should be exercised in that ability which he giveth *on the occasion*, and which he graciously renews from time to time, as it seemeth him good."

Yet even "the Friends," though practically more in harmony with their principle than the Brethren, are not quite harmonious in the present day, for example, they constantly invite the public to their meetings "at stated times of human appointment," when some "minister" will be present. Of course, the public, if they go, expect *something*, but "the minister" *may* give them *nothing*, for he has *prepared* nothing (?) The table is spread, but there *may be* no bread. There are plates, and knives, and forks, and glasses, but there *may be* neither meat nor drink. For my part, I cannot see why "the minister" should not wait on the Holy Ghost *before* he invites, and not issue invitations until the Spirit moves him, in which case, he might boldly *promise* a good meal; because "God filleth the hungry with good things," and sendeth none empty away. The primitive Friends were more consistent. But we live in times when false principles are giving way in all directions. To return to "The Church of Old"—

"The prohibitions given by Paul, brought out the only principles on which they could with show of reason be resisted. IMPULSE IS PLEADED AND SET ASIDE, AS BEING THE ANTAGONIST OF THE RULES. Far from being the guide of the Christian assembly, it is set up by *the opposers of Paul, and refused as leading to confusion, and contrary to the mind of the God of order.* The subjection of each gift to the possessor is announced in contravention of it, as the ground of responsibility and order. *You would then set the conduct of the assembly on the very ground forbidden by the Holy Spirit.*"—pp. 177, 178.

"How then can you affirm that 'ministry of the Spirit' is necessary to constitute a church of God?"

"No gathering can claim to be a church of God, save that company that meets in the name of Jesus, and in the dependence upon the *presence, supply, and ministry of the Holy Ghost.*"—*The Lord's Supper and Ministry.*

“On such grounds, of course, the Brethren are unable to recognise any as churches but those of their own sect. *This is sectarianism full-blown.*”—p. 183.

“Does not this your theory cause many practical evils? Do not the highminded and the ignorant, and those unable to edify, rush forward to minister, satisfied that they have the mind of the Spirit? And are they not often incapable of being repressed, because they are convinced they are guided by the Spirit? Is not this conviction strongest in those who have the least right to it? The lowly, the prayerful, the ready to sympathise with the wants and wishes of others, and the loving, are not they slow to assert it? If it be not scriptural, must not the deep student of Scripture be more and more diffident of it, and unwilling to minister? Do not the humble and those most capable of edifying shrink back, when the condition of their ministry is the feeling of assurance that the Holy Ghost moves them?—a feeling which they would esteem it hypocrisy to pretend to, without conviction of the reality; a conviction nowhere promised, much less as the ground of the ministry. Does not it depress those principles which the Holy Spirit sets up as the guide of ministry; and exalt that principle of impulse, which is reprobated as the blind antagonist of rule and order, deaf to every suggestion, through overweening self-confidence?—‘Who is to shut my mouth, when the Spirit inspires and impels me? Misguided men! unpossessed of the mind of Christ, how dare ye think of silencing *the Spirit’s ministry?*’ And do not parties form in your gatherings on this very point?—p. 185.

Alas! dear Brethren, if all hearts could be open in some of your “gatherings”—what troublesome commotions would be often seen—P. F. H. speaks of his own “*agony*”—and could not many tell of dread, lest *So-and-So* should get up to “teach,” of disappointed expectations, and impatient waitings, for the “teacher” to sit down, and cease to vent what one of your chief writers calls “*twaddle and rhodomontade*”—and all this in the name of the Holy Ghost!! Again—

“The need of ministry and edification in the church of Christ is confessed by all. Your theory professed to supply this want. To the eyes of all spectators, and to many among yourselves, it has signally failed when reduced to practice.

This failure has not been owing to want of zeal on your part. *Will you not inquire, if it be not because some of your positions are ruinously unsound?* Live as holily as you might, while you would go on far more lovingly than you do, gift would not be developed—it springs from another and independent source.”—p. 190.

“You profess to have the baptism of power, yet complain that you meet in much weakness; and you do no works of power beyond other Christians. You meet on the basis of 1 Cor. xiv., yet have not those gifts, but the non-miraculous gifts of Eph. iv. only. You have ‘gift in the highest sense,’ as some say, yet no fresh supplementary revelation. You are *immediately* guided of God, yet not infallible. You have none of the gifts, ‘in their primary form and character,’ yet you have prophecy still, and act on the rules regarding it.”—p. 193.

“There is no ground in Scripture, you say, for supposing that an educated ministry and the exclusive services of but one man, were the intention of God for his Church.’ Granted. But when you have arrived thus far, what is the next step? Have you returned back to the platform of Holy Writ, by throwing the ministry open to every male believer, and adding —‘the Holy Ghost is in the Church’? If education is *bad*, is *no* education better? Do you gain in light and power thereby? If study and preparation be *bad*, is *no* preparation better? Let those speak who have heard you! You have the *form* of apostolic ministry, will any dare to say you have its *light* and *power*? Is there not wanting an operation of the Holy Ghost, not now put forth?”—p. 195.

“Have you not cause to dread the further creeping in of Quakerism? One or two of the tracts from which I have quoted, are by ex-Quakers; and your theory greatly accords with theirs. The old Quakers taught that every *man*, woman, and child, had a light within, to which it was only needful for him to turn, in order to find the mind of God, and if obedient to its teaching he was led of the Spirit.”—p. 197.

So far the author of “The Church of Old.”

After all this, “Brethren” will not be surprised if I take the advice of an “*emeritus*” and *retired* Brother, who wrote to me the other day as follows:—

“These are not days when a Christian, and a servant of the Lord, can afford to take ‘a leap in the dark.’”

Especially as another veteran of the same experience assures me that—

“My position, and the blessing God gives me in it, is *immeasurably superior to that of the Brethren?*”

One Brother, indeed, at Freemasons' Hall encouraged me to adopt “open ministry,” on the ground that “I should have more visitors at Sunderland;” but, if the testimony of “Brethren” be true, that would be a very dubious advantage, and I ought to be thankful that my principles preclude the necessity of my crying, “Save me from my friends.” I was informed that in a certain watering-place in the South-West, a “visitor,” who was not invited, took the “gathering” entirely into his own hands, and elbowed out the regular teacher, in the name of the Holy Ghost!!

I write not all this, dear Brethren, in unholy triumph, but in godly sorrow, for if you have “not wrought any deliverance in the earth,” I am sure I have not; nor is it my aim to bring you over to my platform of worship and ministry, for I am not satisfied with it, nor with any other that I see around, but to bring you down safely from that pinnacle on which I am persuaded *God* did not set you. All I can say for myself is, that I trust my practice agrees with my principles; and that, until inspired gifts are again the order of the day, I see no better principles than my own. I am “a burnt child that dreads the fire”—burnt, or rather scorched, but not consumed. I have seen enough of false pretensions to peculiar guidance by the Holy Ghost to make the apostolic caution ever ring in my ears, “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.” Nevertheless, I do believe there *is* a guidance of the Spirit, that he is the sole power of all ministry and worship, and that in proportion as men, naturally gifted, converted, and called by the combined agency of Providence and grace, to “labour in the word and

doctrine," cultivate communion with the Father and the Son, so they will be used and blessed by the Holy Ghost.

May the Lord, dear Brethren, guide you and me, and all his saints, into all truth in theory, and all holiness in practice.

I am,

Yours affectionately in Christ,

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS REES.

THIRD LETTER.

DEAR BRETHREN,

If there are any special witnesses for Christ, in these last days, I believe you are among the number, and therefore I am particularly interested in your testimony ; and it is because of this interest, that I now take up my pen to address you on the above subjects. My reason for troubling you with a third letter is, that I have just discovered in a pamphlet, entitled "Christian Ministry," by a representative man amongst you, Mr. William Kelly, whose writings, as far as I have read them, are the clearest, the deepest, and the most profitable of any that have come under my notice from your authorship, I have just discovered that he denies the existence, nay, the possibility of the existence of bishops or elders in the Church since the Apostles' days.

His words are these, p. 49, "Persons might ask, have you then elders or bishops now? I answer No * * * because none can have elders or bishops without apostolical authority in person, or by delegate to appoint them."

In another tract which I have recently perused, entitled "The Brethren," I find the same sentiment, as follows, p. 3, "Local charges, as eldership, etc., they infer from Scripture, required the sanction of the Apostles, or their delegates, to validate the appointment."

Now, I confess, if this be light, it is entirely new

to me, and somewhat startling, alike from its novelty, and its bearing upon several important parts of Scripture.

In my first letter, I questioned the applicability of 1 Cor. xiv., so often referred to by you in your advocacy of open worship and teaching—to any spiritual endowments now possessed by the Church—and I was strongly censured by many of you for thus rendering so large a portion of the word entirely useless as a guide to her in her present condition.

But, dear brethren, if this was a ground of censure in my case, what will you say in your own, to the alleged present inapplicability and inutility of the following passages, Acts xiv. 23, xx. 17-35, 1st Timothy iii. 3-7, Titus i. 5-9, 1st Peter v. 1-4, James v. 14? For if there neither are, nor can be elders, or bishops, and I will add “deacons,” for these, too, were appointed by the Apostles, Acts vi., then all these portions are mere history to us, conveying no instruction whatever about post-apostolical Church-government, so that you and I are on a par in respect to the inapplicability of certain parts of the New Testament to existing circumstances.

You say there are no bishops or elders now, and that all who bear those names are mere “shams” (Kelly p. 53). *I* say, there are no *Charismatic* gifts now, and that all who pretend to them are deceived.

You say, that the Scriptures above cited in reference to the Episcopal office, are a dead letter. *I* say the same thing of 1st Cor. xiv. in reference to the “gifts.”

You maintain, however, that though there can be no *Church officers* now, yet the *Charismata* remain, not indeed *all* that are specified in the above-named chapter, but a sufficient number for the edification of

the body of Christ, and you cite Romans xii. 6-8, and Ephesians iv. 11-13, in proof of your assertion.

With respect to the former passage, Mr. Kelly says, p. 1, "Here we have not that character of foundation gift which was limited to the earliest days of the Church * * * we have what is called the ordinary ministry required for the good of the Saints, rather than the manifestation of God's power in man, by the Spirit, in witness of the risen Lord, or of Christ's love to his body, in its fulness and in principle too, till the completeness of his work on the earth." With respect to the latter passage, it is affirmed by you, that as the design of the gifts there specified is "for the perfecting of the Saints * * * till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, etc.," and as that design is certainly not yet accomplished, therefore those gifts, except Apostles, who virtually continue in their writings, must still be in the Church, that is, there are still "prophets" not, as Mr. Kelly says, exactly like those in the early Church, but gifted men "who bring out the truth of God so as to deal with man's conscience, and give him the full conviction that it is God who is speaking to him by men," (p. 16)—and there are still "evangelists, pastors, and teachers" "for the perfecting of the saints."

But it appears to me unwarrantable to identify persons with things—Apostles with their writings, and then to say that in this sense, we still have the fulfilment of Ephesians iv. 11. Equally unwarrantable is it to substitute *modified* prophets—that is *uninspired* prophets for the prophets of Romans xii. 6. The Irvingites are more consistent, they will have none but living men for Apostles, and inspired men for Prophets. For my part I cannot see—since

“Apostles and Prophets” are equally “foundation gifts” (Ephesians ii. 20), and since living “Apostles” there are none—why we must need have living “Prophets.” I hold that all *Charismata* were properly miraculous—that some of them could be imparted by Apostles alone, Acts viii. 14-17, xix. 6, 2 Timothy i. 6, and that none of them now exist. If this seems strange to you, I ask is it more strange than to deprive the Church of bishops, about whose necessity, and whose qualifications so much is said in Scripture—because there are no Apostles to appoint them? In Acts xx. Paul tells these officers in the Church at Ephesus—that “the *Holy Ghost* had made them bishops to feed the flock of God;” and in 1st Peter v. that Apostle exhorts the elders to “shepherdise the flock of God, acting the bishop over them, not by constraint;” but alas, according to you, for more than seventeen centuries, the Holy Ghost has not been able to make any bishops, elders, or shepherds for the flock, because during that time there have been no Apostles! I repeat it, *Charismata* were miraculous, and teaching—*Charismata* were inspired—hence Peter says, “As every man hath received a *Charisma*, so minister the same * * if any man speak—as God’s oracles,” which does *not* mean—“according to the Scriptures” but, *with the same authority* as the Scriptures—as the mouth-piece of God. If therefore, your teachers profess to have the *Charisma* of teaching, they profess to have *oracular* authority—that is, to be *inspired*—but are they? On the contrary, is not their very best teaching *based* on 1st.—Artificial Education—that is on the arts of Reading and Grammar, and on the knowledge of Hebrew and Greek; 2nd.—on Natural Ability; 3rd.—on ordinary or extraordinary Grace, but NOT the

inspiration of the New Testament Prophets, and Teachers ; 4th.—on the study of the whole Bible, whereas the *Charismatic* teachers of the Apostolic Church—especially among the Gentiles—had no need either of learning, or even of reading, or of peculiar ability ; lastly, on this head, we have a strong confirmation of the purely miraculous character of the edification of the early Church, in the fact, that in 1st Corinthians, xii. 28, we have “ Apostles, Prophets, and Teachers ” placed in the same category as “ tongues,” “ gifts of healing,” and “ working of miracles,” &c., &c., all alike “ set in the Church ” by God for the edification of the body of Christ—nay even “ the word of wisdom ” and “ the word of knowledge ” are equally with “ the gifts of healing,” ascribed to “ the manifestation ”—that is, the miraculous working of “ the Spirit.” Whilst, therefore, you hold that *Charismata*, in the Apostolic sense, remain, and office has ceased, I hold the reverse, viz. : that office remains, and *Charismata* have ceased, I maintain that there are, and always have been, bishops, elders, and pastors, whose qualifications, as laid down by Paul in his letters to Timothy and Titus, are not *Charismatic* at all, but natural, and acquired, and such as are conspicuous to every eye. According to Paul, “ if any man [in his days] desired the office of a bishop, he desired a *good-work* ” but according to you, if any man, during the last seventeen centuries, desired it, he desired a *vain-work*, for it could not be accomplished. Now, I do not believe this. I am convinced that the Holy Ghost can, and does, make bishops in every age, notwithstanding the absence of Apostles, though I confess I am not satisfied with the general mode of their recognition and appointment. On the other hand, I do not think it proved

that *all* Church-officers were appointed either by Apostles, or their delegates. It is indeed *assumed* that Timothy at Ephesus, as well as Titus at Crete, "ordained elders;" but in his letters to the former, though Paul lays down the qualifications of bishops and deacons, he says nothing about Timothy *appointing* them. If, however, both these classes of officers owed their authority to the source you affirm, and if the stream was dried up when that source was removed, then as I have said the Holy Ghost has long ceased to "make bishops," and "deacons" have departed with them! Luther, Knox, and their fellow-Reformers of the sixteenth century, the Puritans of the seventeenth, the Revivalists of the eighteenth, and pre-eminently Wesley and Whitfield, were indeed gifted men, but they held no *office* in the Church of God! This, I say again, I do not believe, for we have *seen* in them, and thousands more, the works and qualifications of evangelists, bishops, and deacons of the flock of Christ; whereas, *Charismata*, in the Scriptural sense, we see nothing, and yet on the assumption that these gifts are still in the Church, and that you possess them—you meet together for worship and ministry without preparation, and without arrangement. A well-known "brother" told me the other day, that "all preparation in your assemblies was hypocrisy."

On this assumption, the late excellent William Trotter declared, in a pamphlet on ministry, that he would as soon join in the worship of the golden calf, as in any worship that was not conducted on the principles of "brethren," while Mr. Kelly, in the work before quoted, addressing all who have not yet adopted those principles, says, "Will you yield to unbelief, and go on in disobedience, because you have hitherto been unfaithful? Why not begin

with humbling yourselves, for your blind zeal in so long defending human tradition, and fighting against the Word of God?" (p. 54). "No preparation," and yet prepared Hymns and Tunes; why not prepared addresses? tell me, brethren, tell me.

I can understand how, in "the ruin of the Church," as you speak, there should be a withdrawal of the Charismatic gifts, just as after the Babylonish Captivity, there was a withdrawal of the Urim and Thummin, and of the Shechinah, but I cannot understand how, in any circumstances, there should be a withdrawal of overseers of the flock of God.

Let the gifts return, and for my part, I shall be too glad to make way for them, notwithstanding some confusion in their exercise, for at any rate, there will be no "clouds without rain," as confessedly there often are amongst you. At Corinth there was much disorder but no "sham;" they had too many real, to need false gifts; whereas it is the complaint of some of your chief men, that mere pretenders to worship, and ministry, repeatedly mock God, and distress the assembly.

Meanwhile I am as dead against "the one man system" as yourselves. I would gladly make way for proved grace, and ability in any shape. "Would to God all the Lord's people were prophets," but when this comes to pass, their prophetship cannot be hid. "Let the deacons be first proved, then let them deaconize." Let the teachers be first proved, then let them teach.

In conclusion, as far as I can see, the Friends, who hold your principles, barring birth-membership, are more consistent than you in their practice; at any rate, they do not introduce the confessedly uninspired element of Hymn Books. Inspiration is their theory

—and to this they give no such formal contradiction as you do.

Dear Brethren, I love and admire you, and I regard your prosperity as mine, hence I address you for the third time ; but I fear that, as with all God's special witnesses in times past, so with you in these concluding days—some human error has been associated with Divine truth—it was so with the Reformers—it was so with the Puritans—is was so with George Fox—it was so with John Wesley—may it not be so with you ? For myself, I can truly affirm, I am a poor dissatisfied seeker of better things than I anywhere behold, but I cannot embrace a cloud instead of Juno. I have not had the miserable experience of Mr. Dorman, among you for a quarter of a century ; but, with him, I say, “power, power, I want power.”

Let the Holy Ghost show himself in Charismatic gifts, and forthwith 1 Cor. xiv. is my platform of ministry and worship. Till then, human order for uninspired endowments.

I am, my dear Brethren,

Yours affectionately in Christ,

ARTHUR A. REES,

SUNDERLAND.

FOURTH LETTER.

DEAR BRETHREN IN THE LORD,

Your cause and mine are one—our aim the same—that is, the glory of God in the worship of His saints.

I am sure you seek to help me—I am equally sure I would help you, to obtain correct views on this important subject.

The stronghold from which you assail others, and in which you defend yourselves, is 1st Corinthians xiv., but it seems to me that in that very fortress, a gate is unguarded through which you may be successfully attacked,—and here it is. At the close of this chapter, the Apostle cautions the Corinthians that “the things which he writes are the commandments of the Lord,” but to what does he refer? not to the facts he states, but to the directions he gives. Very well, what are they?

1st, “Follow after love;” 2nd, “Desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy;” 3rd, “Let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue, pray that he may interpret;” 4th, “Be not children in understanding, but in understanding be men;” 5th, “Let all things be done unto edifying;” 6th, “Let the speakers in an unknown tongue speak by two, at one meeting, or at the most by three, and that, one at a time, and let one interpret, but if there be no interpreter, let there be no speaking in an unknown tongue;” 7th, “Let the Prophets speak two or three, and let the rest

judge, but if any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace ;” 8th, “ Let your women keep silence in the churches ;” 9th, “ Let all things be done decorously ;” 10th, “ Let all things be done in order,” or, as the words may be better rendered, “ according to appointment or arrangement.”*

Such, dear brethren, is the decalogue of this chapter, which your chief writers love to call “ the unrepealed statutes of the Lord,” without which we have no guidance for new testament worship.

But now, let me ask, how many of these “ commandments ” you obey, or seek to obey ? Do you “ covet spiritual gifts ” in *the Apostle’s sense of these gifts ?* if not, how can you reconcile your disobedience with the statement that this chapter contains “ the unrepealed statutes of the Lord ?” And as to the 6th and 7th “ commandments ” in this list, you admit that they are entirely inapplicable to the present condition of the church, for there are no “ unknown tongues,” no “ interpreters,” no “ prophets,” in the scriptural sense of “ prophets,” and no immediate and inspired “ revelation.”

I will go further, and say that even those commandments which *are* applicable, and practicable in all ages, you seem to me systematically to disregard.

Let me explain,—admitting, for the sake of argument, that the Church possesses those “ gifts ” which you assert she does, and the use of which is regulated by this chapter, still, I maintain, that you *do not* use

* So Rotheram’s Translation, and Liddell and Scott’s Lexicon ; Vulgate, “ *secundum ordinem* ”—For the classical meaning of “ *ordo* ” see the following :—“ *Exercitus his ordinibus instructus,*” Livy ; “ *Fati ordo,*” Seneca ; “ *Nomina in ordinem referro,*” Cæsar. Compare also, Luke i. 8., 1st Cor., xl. 34., xvl. 1.

them according to the rules therein prescribed—nay, you *could not* so use them in agreement with your theory of “the sovereign action of the Spirit,” as Mr. Kelly expresses it—an action which Mr. Lincoln compares to “the movements of the wind on an Eolian harp”—for the Lord “commands” the Church, and particularly the gifted, to “do all things for edification”—and, to that end, “according to order,” or arrangement—and, as a sample of arrangement, he “arranges” that not more than three, at the most, shall prophesy at the same meeting—all of whom must give way to a new and sudden “revelation.” But how preposterous would be such an arrangement, if the assembly were like an “Eolian harp,” and the Spirit, like the “sovereign” wind playing upon it, as it “listed,” for surely he would play “decently” and to “edification ;” and all that the “harp” would have to do, would be to remain in Quaker quietude. But the very fact that the gifted are told how, and when, to use their gifts, disproves your theory of the Spirit’s action—that is, the “harp” is responsible for the condition of its strings—and for the number of tunes it plays at a sitting—in plain words, the *gifted rule the gifts*, even when inspired, and decline to use them, except in accordance with a *prescribed rule*.

Dear Brethren, is this your practice? Though you have *not* the gifts of this chapter, do not systematically repudiate “arrangement?” Would you not regard it as “hindering the spirit,” “dictating to the spirit,” “repressing the spirit” to “arrange” that only “two or three” should speak or pray at one meeting?—that the Lord’s Supper should *not* be huddled up in a corner at the close?—that the hymns should *not* be too frequent, too long, inappropriate, or incapable of being sung? And yet, without such “arrangements,” how can all things be done “unto

edification?"—that is, how can you obey "the commandments of the Lord" in your chosen chapter? Again, the Lord "commands" Christians that in the acts of worship and ministry, they should be "men in understanding"—but how could this "command" be obeyed, if, in these exercises, they were like "an Eolian harp?" The "understanding," surely, should be the qualification of the musician, not of the instrument on which he plays—in plain words, what room would there be for the exercise of "understanding" in the use of gifts, if your theory of the Spirit's action were correct? In this case, the direction would be, what I so often see in your writings, but what I do *not* see in this chapter.—"Wait on the Spirit," which is Quakerism. "Be quiet, till he moves you, and then there will be no disorder, or lack of edification." Instead of this, the *whole responsibility of order and profit is thrown, not on the giver, but on the gifted*, who are directed to have, and to use, not a "child's," but a "man's understanding," in *the exercise of their gifts*—that is, instead of being told to "wait on the Spirit," they are told to wait on their own manly sense.

Is this your practice? If it was the practice "commanded" by the Lord to a church overflowing with miraculous endowments, ought it not, *a fortiori*, to be the practice of a church which has no such endowments—nay, in which, confessedly, there are many sham gifts that ought not to be used at all?

Yet you repudiate all "arrangement" under the pretext that the Spirit arranges there and then, and you leave no place for the exercise of "manly understanding," under the pretext that the "harp" must not choose its own tunes, but the musician—that is, you disobey that very chapter, for not obeying which, your chief writers condemn others in the most unmeasured terms. Mr. Lincoln calls all

systems but that of "the Brethren," "apostacy." Mr. Kelly uses equally strong language, while Mr. Darby, I am told, regards those who differ from him on this subject as guilty, dispensationally, of the "sin against the Holy Ghost." Pardon me, therefore, if I speak with equal plainness, though not with equal dogmatism and severity—and if, for my own sake, for yours, and that of my fellow-Christians everywhere, I sift, and sift again, in the sieve of Scripture, pretensions so high, so exclusive, and so censorious.

One word more, in two particulars you *do* "arrange" where the Corinthians, the Spirit, and the Lord *did not* arrange, and by so arranging I judge you do well, as "men in understanding," though thereby you violate your own principle, and fall into the practice of "the sects." First, you come *prepared* with a humanly "arranged" Hymn Book, a copy of which is procured by every worshipper. Secondly, you come prepared with artificial tunes, which the worshippers must learn beforehand or else keep silent. And, in fact, does it not sometimes happen that hymns are given out which cannot be sung, because the tune is not generally known?

Here, then, is "arrangement;" but why not carry it further? why not obey the 14th chapter of 1st Corinthians; that is, "the Lord's commands," and "arrange" the number and length of the addresses, prayers, and hymns, for the sake of "decency" and "edification?" for lack of which arrangement, I, and hundreds more, have often been vexed and wearied by, not "two, or at most three," but, at least, half-a-dozen praying one after another without cessation, and by several delivering long addresses in succession, to the great distress of the audience.

In conclusion, it appears to me, after much prayer

and study of Scripture, and of your writings, 1st, that your theory of the Spirit's action in the assembly is identical with that of the Quakers, and is wrong ; 2nd, that, in your prepared and "arranged" hymns and tunes, your practice, unlike that of the Quakers, is opposed to your theory.

I am, dear brethren,

Your affectionate brother in Christ,

ARTHUR A. REES.



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