

CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE

NOT

'ECCLESIASTICAL INDEPENDENCY.'

LETTERS

OF

J. N. DARBY & MR. B. ELLIS,

RELATING TO THE

REFUSAL OF SHEFFIELD BRETHERN TO RECOGNISE

A CERTAIN COURSE OF

ECCLESIASTICAL DISCIPLINE ENACTED IN LONDON,

WITH

Replies on behalf of Sheffield Brethren.

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1866.

INTRODUCTION.

TO THE SAINTS OF THE VARIOUS ASSEMBLIES IN FELLOWSHIP WITH J.N.D.

Your practice of excommunicating *Assemblies* of Saints began with Bethesda. When is it to end? You were led to it not by any Scripture direction or example, but by a circular signed J.N.D. Many in fellowship with you at the time would not join in this course, because they saw it to be contrary to the Lord's will. Failing to obey J.N.D.'s requirements, they were counted unfaithful to the Lord, and were also peremptorily and summarily "cut off." You are solemnly asked—Was this right in the sight of the Lord?

Satan seeks to bring about that which is an abomination to the Lord, "discord among brethren." Thus, he mars their testimony, and makes them to hinder, instead of helping one another. He prevents, too, by the same means, that which is so beautifully set forth in Psalm 133. And the "wiles of the devil" are still effective. Saints now—as of old—are corrupted and seduced by his subtleties, and turned from the "simplicity that is in Christ." He can still present himself as an "angel of light," and his servants as "ministers of righteousness." Faithfulness to Christ was the plea urged by J.N.D. to induce brethren to pursue the course he pointed out for them. He was greatly and rightly honoured for the service he had rendered to the Saints, and for his devotedness to Christ. This led to over-confidence, and his direction was followed without testing it by Scripture. All will admit that Peter, the servant and the apostle, was as devoted and as much to be honoured as J.N.D. But the Lord had to say to Peter—"Get thee behind me, Satan; thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." And Paul had to "withstand him to the face," because he "walked not uprightly," and the "truth of the Gospel" was in danger. In those things Peter was to be blamed, though greatly honoured and loved and delighted in for his many excellencies, by his Lord and by the saints. Satan could have him, and sift him, and use him. It need not be thought therefore that J.N.D. was out of the reach of Satan. Desiring to mar their peculiar testimony against sectarianism and division, and to lead a multitude astray, would he not seek to turn aside a "chief standard bearer." Eighteen years have passed since the course he prescribed was entered upon by brethren, and the sad fruits of it are around you on every side; and every day you are more and more loudly challenged as to the position of antagonism to the "holy and beloved"

saints of God in which you find yourselves. The question is—do you occupy this antagonistic position to your brethren through the “wiles of the devil,” or have you been guided into it as you profess, and as probably most of you believe, by the Spirit of God? Do you excommunicate *assemblies of saints* in obedience to any direction of the Word of God, or have you been led to it (unwittingly) by the “commandments of men?”

Many voices have been raised against you of late. Abundant evidence has been offered to show that you maintain a wrong position, which Scripture condemns—that you misjudge your brethren whom, instead of loving as the Lord enjoins, you practically shun and despise—and that you are governed by “principles” that are opposed both to grace and righteousness, and that are not in accordance with the truth of God. Voices from without have been raised in loving and earnest remonstrance. And now from within, from among yourselves, from those you love and honour, and who have loved and served you in the Lord for thirty years, there arise voices. Voices of solemn warning, of affectionate entreaty, of unflinching and faithful testimony, as to your wrong position and procedure to your brethren, and as to the evil, corrupting, Christ-dishonouring doctrine (like Newton’s, but worse), that is in your midst—propounded by J. N. D., and consented to and defended now by some of your chief *leaders*. Since the letter last in the series to J. N. D. was written, the pamphlets of W. H. D. and P. F. H. have appeared. A momentous responsibility rests upon you in regard to all that they set forth. How will you treat it? Surely and solemnly, but in a clearer and louder tone, it echoes the Lord’s oft repeated word to you, “Consider your ways!” It is now a question of Christ and of the Cross with you, and not of your brethren only. Surely, beloved brethren, you will not, for *consistency’s* sake even, be careless any longer.*

The bad precedent of excommunicating “*Assemblies*” was followed in London in 1863. Saints were then again “cut off” wholesale, without reason, and contrary to Scripture. The Assembly at Sheffield could not join in this, seeing it to be contrary to the Lord’s will; and for obedience to the Lord and because of disobedience to a few London brethren, the Assembly at Rotherham assumed authority, without enquiry or waiting upon the Lord for guidance, to “cut off” *all* the Saints of the Sheffield meeting. There was no “long suffering” endeavour “to keep the unity of the Spirit” in this certainly. It was a very hasty act. In a pamphlet issued in 1864† Sheffield brethren

* A paper from the French, by J. N. D., “on the Non-Atoning Sufferings of Christ,” has just appeared—but *without date*. There is in it no attempt to explain or withdraw what is objected to. The aim seems to be “to hush and cover up” the *bad doctrine by stating truth that no Christian questions*. J. N. D. knows how to put forth *right things* that are *unquestioned*, in order to hide and excuse *wrong things* that are *challenged*.

He is not alone in this, as W. K.’s answer to Mr. Gilpin shews. The aim in the latter is to *excite prejudice* against W. H. D.’s pamphlet—not to answer it.

† This pamphlet may still be had—see advertisement on cover.

made known the Scriptural reasons for their course and judgment. The history of the action in London was also set forth in it. And now, in the present year, the Sheffield case is still prominently before you. J.N.D. has just published an article bearing upon it in the August number of the "*Bible Treasury*." Brethren in Sheffield, therefore, feel it to be right and proper to publish, at the present juncture, the correspondence contained in the following pages, as furnishing further important evidence on the subject. It is for you to judge the character and the Scripturalness of the communications on either side. Our desire is that, amongst other things at work, it may help to bring about a renewal of happy fellowship by the gracious power of the Spirit of God, and in the practical acknowledgement that *Christ alone is Lord*. The convictions expressed in our former pamphlet are only more deeply impressed by the lapse of time, and we hold them now much more strongly and are more fully assured that they are according to the Lord's mind and will. We would now earnestly and affectionately entreat you to "*Consider your ways*." No longer take things for granted, or on the bare assertions of your leaders, but test things like the Bereans of old, by the "*Word of God*." "*Prove all things, hold fast that which is good*." This is the Lord's bidding. We would ask you also to remember the exhortation addressed to "*all who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours*." "*Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined in the same mind and in the same judgment*." This can only be in seeking to honour Christ and in owning him as the "*one Lord*." A beloved brother (W.T.) who is now "*with the Lord*," said before his departure, "*If things are prolonged, God may in His own way loosen things a little*." The burden of maintaining your miscalled "*discipline*," that has been *bound* upon you, has been and is hard to bear. Is it not time that it should be loosened? Healing would be for the Lord's glory, for our mutual comfort and edification, and for the discomfiture of our common adversary. It was said to God's people of old "*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee*." There is a fitting counterpart to this for you and us: "*Let us therefore follow after the things that make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another*." That our God may help us all to do this, and remove the hindrances to holy and peaceful fellowship among those who desire to do His will, is our earnest prayer. Remember "*He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord*."—Prov. xvii. 15.

Sheffield, Nov., 1866.

Signed by

E. B. CHESTERMAN.
G. BURROWS.
W. ASHLEY.
J. MARSHALL.
R. L. BRUNTON.

JAS. OXLEY.
G. KNOWLES.
G. SAUNDERS.
S. W. SPURR.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN MR. ELLIS, A LONDON
MINISTERING BROTHER, AND A MEMBER OF THE
SATURDAY EVENING MEETING—AND S. W. S. OF
SHEFFIELD—IN REFERENCE TO THE EXCOMMUNI-
CATION OF THE SAINTS OF THE LATE EAST-STREET
AND PECKHAM MEETINGS.

(From B. E. to S. W. S.)

Peckham, London, S.E.,

Jan. 30th, 1864.

My dear Brother Spurr,

It is now many years since we met at Reading, but I do not cease to remember you; and I remember, too, with thankfulness the fellowship we had.

And now because I hear some trouble is come in among you, through the visit of a brother (W. Goodall); without knowing what he, personally, has said or done, I desire to put before you the position in which the meeting at Peckham, with which *he* is associated, stands. Many months ago, now more than a year, I think, a young brother (Wm. Saunders) brought a letter from his father (who stated he was unable to come), to a Scripture Reading which had been held at Blackheath many years. Its purport was, to ask for fellowship of the brethren in preaching the Gospel at Peckham. It was given to me first, and I passed it on to brethren Cronin, Ritchie, and Hitchcock, who happened to be there that night. All gave it a decided negative. What led them to do so I cannot say; *my* motive for doing so was because Richard Saunders was at that time in close association with F. Eland and W. Goodall, each of which had signed a pamphlet, and circulated it widely. The former opposed the judgment of the fifteen or sixteen meetings in London, who had rejected Alex. Stewart for his evil course in London; and if the Holy Ghost is still in the Church, giving his guidance to those who wait on him, had rejected the judgment of that Holy Spirit. The latter had signed his name to a paper, in which a godly meeting, held on Saturday evening, for the purpose of helping on the spirit of unity among so many meetings in London, was stigmatised as usurping the authority of the local gatherings and destroying their action. And the brother (W. Goodall) was not in the habit of attending that meeting, which made his act the more sad and mischievous. Jude says:—"These speak evil of things which they know not." Subsequently to this, a tea meeting was held in Peckham, at which the question of *breaking bread* at Peckham was discussed, and opposed by brethren meeting at East-street, on what grounds I do not know. Shortly after the same young man (William Saunders) took a notice to the Saturday meeting, asking them to circulate it through the meetings with the other notices that there would be breaking of bread at Peckham, next Lord's day. As there was no one present from the neighbourhood who could enter into the facts of the case, the brethren said they could do nothing unless they knew that it was an act done in concert with the

East-street meeting, with which they were then in communion. W. Saunders replied that it *was* in concert with that meeting, and that there were only *two* dissentient voices. Here is covered up a *gross falsehood*. There were only *two* leading brethren who expressed their dissent, but these expressed the sentiments of at least *fifty*—quite two-thirds of the East-street meeting. The meeting was then commenced at Peckham, in defiance of all fellowship, and the sin of Korah acted over again. These brethren had for a long time been saying of the elder brethren—"Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi;"—calumniating (those) the elders who had been serving the Lord so many years, and then acting in this sad spirit of independence. Nothing has appeared in my eyes more deliberately wicked since I have known brethren. "All of you be subject one to another," God says, "for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble." These are plain facts, beloved brother; the Lord give you grace, as a wise man, to judge the truth. "God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a *lie*." How solemn! and yet how much of it there is at *this* day.

Affectionately yours in Christ,
BENJ. ELLIS.

(From S. W. S. to B. E.)

West Street, Sheffield,
February 8th, 1864.

Beloved Brother in the Lord,

I thank you for your letter and for your kind remembrance of me as in the Lord, I too remember the fellowship we had together, and the thought of it, and of those now with Christ with whom it was enjoyed, makes me ever think of you with truest affection. That we are "members of Christ," and therefore "members one of another," is what we ought constantly to remember, as "partakers of the grace of life," and more especially so when we find in some things that we are differently minded. Though I do not coincide in the views you express in your letter, nor concur in your judgment and course in regard to the matters you speak about, I do not feel that "love in the Spirit" should therefore cease, or that fellowship and communion in so far and so much as it may be enjoyed should be set aside. The things in and about which we are happily in concord and agreement are more and greater by far than those in which we do not see "eye to eye" or feel heart to heart. The latter ought not to have more power to separate than the former to keep us together. When however as Saints we seek in any measure however small to *magnify ourselves*, there is sure to be disagreement.

The Spirit's guidance and power, and spiritual unity are found when we seek only to "magnify the Lord." The lowliness of Mary commends itself, and our spirits are refreshed and drawn into communion with hers when we hear her say "My soul doth magnify the Lord," Fellowship of the Spirit is found when any from their hearts are able to say "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together." As Saints, we should surely

seek so to act as not to have to say "other Lords have had dominion over us"—for to us "there is one Lord." The Word is a two edged sword. After reading your letter and the texts you quote, I cannot but remark that Scripture also contemplates evil and danger of a character and kind the very opposite to what you speak about. Scylla stands over against Charybdis. We need wisdom and grace to keep us in the middle course. And in judging of each other we should bear in mind that when Scylla fills our eye, Charybdis is often forgotten. The servants and elders have need to guard against *even seeming* to take a place of *rule and authority*. "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive greater condemnation" says James. "*Not as being lords over God's heritage, but examples to the flock*" says Peter. What the Lord says I need not repeat. The Servant's true honour is to hide himself that his Lord may ever be in prominence. Subjection one to another in the *fear of God* is right and beautiful, but if in the *fear of man* and in giving him a place of authority, it bringeth a snare, and whatever the profession or pretensions accompanying it, subverts the authority of the Lord. To "speak evil of dignities" is wrong—but "to obey the Lord rather than men" is right. Your statement as to the Peckham Meeting is I think not quite accurate, and does not set forth the whole matter. Here in Sheffield, we have been exercised for a long time before the Lord as to the ways of some of our brethren in London. But we should very gladly have remained quiet, had not the visits of our brother Goodall from time to time brought upon us the solemn responsibility of acting and of judging for ourselves the course we ought to take. It has been a trying matter to us. For we found ourselves in the painful position of being unable to see and act with our brethren in London. The Scriptural reasons for our judgment and course you will find in the pamphlet I send herewith, and other matters too in connection with the history of the case. Had brethren in London acted simply and surely by the Holy Ghost, neither we nor our brother Goodall, nor any Saint indeed could have questioned the rightness of your course. That you have done so, you *assume*. But it needs to be *shown and proved*. Neither of these things are attempted. It seems to be expected and required that all this should be taken for granted. And to have a question or to ask one, or honestly to believe that brethren in an Assembly or the Church, though having the Spirit's presence, may *yet fail*, and be seen by the light of the Word to judge and act contrary to the Lord's will, and the Spirit's mind, is judged and treated as *sin, and excommunication* is enforced as the penalty for it. This I believe to be absolutely and most sadly and seriously wrong. *Wilful contrariety* to the Lord's plainly expressed will, ought to be judged and set aside. But honest differences of thought are *not to be judged*, Romans xiv. I find nothing in your letter to lead me to believe that you are right in rejecting the saints of the Peckham Meeting. Rather the reverse. You say "the meeting was commenced in defiance of all fellowship,

and the *sin of Korah* acted over again." This to me seems very sad. What does it mean? The very first thing that you tell me in your letter is that there was a *request for fellowship* in the preaching of the gospel at Peckham, which was refused.

Afterwards, you say there was again the *seeking for fellowship*, as to the meeting *there* for breaking bread. Is this *defiance of all fellowship*? Plainly enough your letter shows that *all* fellowship was *refused*, but that it was *sought for* and not *set at defiance* by the saints at Peckham. I find no sufficient Godly reason for thus refusing all fellowship. You say two-thirds of the East-street meeting did not agree with the Peckham meeting being commenced. And there was fellowship between them and the Saturday meeting. How far the one helped on the action of the other I do not know. I have heard of no *attempt at healing or preventing division and strife* that were needless. But allowing what you say, and supposing only one-third, or one-fifth of the meeting desired it—where was the *sin* in commencing the meeting at Peckham? Where is the authority to limit faith in the Lord's *promise*? or does it require a *license* from *any* assembly, ere two or three even in simple faith may act upon it? You tell me, "the sin of Korah" was acted over again. This *seems* to imply, and certainly assumes plainly, that some of the saints, the Saturday evening meeting, if you please, have authority to act as above. That they have privileges *from the Lord* beyond their brethren—and are really set *above and over them*. For the "sin of Korah" and those with him was direct rebellion against the Lord in setting aside those whom *He had appointed to priesthood and authority*. Do not wonder, dear brother, that ourselves and brother Goodall demur to things that *even seem* to present claims and pretensions of this kind. Apart from this, where is the Scripture warrant for forbidding the meeting at Peckham? or the reason for it beyond that of the disciples of old, "they follow not us." Why refuse *fellowship* with those you owned as saints a short time since, as you tell me, and on whom God has set "*His seal*?" 2 Cor., 1 c., 21, 22; and of whom He says, "they are *no more* (never again) strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints." You separate them as a *whole*, yet charge none of them with evil, moral or doctrinal; though you speak of their deliberate wickedness as worse than you have ever seen before, "the sin of Korah acted over again." I must say, that *to my own mind* your course *appears* neither to have the Lord's sanction nor authority, that it is not the path of "grace and truth," that it is not in any way an "endeavouring to keep the unity of the *Spirit* in the bond of peace, with all lowliness and longsuffering," &c. Matt. v. 9. It *seems* to have an appearance of that Peter warns against "not as being lords *over* God's heritage," and has *in effect*, whatever the purpose and motive, much of the *reality* of it. It is a *most solemn thing* to refuse the Lord's blood-bought and blood-washed saints to fellowship at *His* table, in that which tells of their deliverance and and reminds them of their deliverer. Feeble and perverse in many things they

may be, but He *loves* His own to the end, and washes their feet by the way. John, xiii. 13—17. To set all fellowship at defiance, when the Lord would have it *maintained* if there is any, Philippians, ii., 1, is very sad. But plainly the doing so rests with those who refuse it, and not with those that seek it, and who would be very thankful for it. This refusal I believe virtually sets aside the claims of Christ in his saints. *Requiring or compelling* others to join in refusing the Lord's people at His table, without plain Scripture warrant, is yet more sad and more solemnly wrong. I can only agree with any who say that those who do this "take too much upon them." The assertion that the Holy Ghost guides to this may lead very many to acquiesce, through fear of disobeying the Spirit. There is great danger that this plea of the Spirit's guidance may be used or *abused* so as to give apparent authority to the "commandments of men," and validity to the significant Romish injunction, "Hear the Church." It is not safe to press "obedience to the Spirit" in some subtle and mysterious guidance, instead of *obedience to the Lord* in the plain directions of the "Word of God." Doing this leads some to hesitate and refuse what they honestly believe to be contrary to the Lord's will, or not plainly authorised by His word. Are they wrong in this? To speak of them as "proud" and "not in subjection," does not make them so. Subjection is not always right. Domination in the church I think is always wrong. Lordship has its place among the Gentiles, "but ye shall not be so" says the Master. Luke, xxii. 24—27. When the truth and authority of Christ were in question, Paul's conduct was not marked by subjection; and many have had to imitate Paul. And may not such things *be* or *come in* amongst ourselves "the brethren" as we are called, as to make it needful and right—"not to be subject" in respect thereto. "Why compellest thou" was said to Peter the *Apostle*. And Peter was acting in concert with James. They doubtless had *the Spirit*, but surely not His guidance, though Peter and the Jews might have said, and truly perhaps, that their object was "to help on the spirit of unity in many meetings." But be the plea or the object what it might, Paul says—"To whom we gave place *by subjection, no not for an hour.*" There was a *cause*. And in this day some may think there is *sufficient cause* to imitate Paul, (Phil. iii, 17,) and God, who knows the heart, may not resist them. Brethren may judge wrongly in calling them "*proud.*" No new thing. 1 Sam., xvii, 28. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free," is sufficient answer and warrant for '*insubjection*' in regard to all that is of man *only.*" Gal. i, 10, 12, 17. Saints "dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, are not to be subject to (human) ordinances." This I believe is *the real matter at issue.* *Human requirements—claims* for more than faith in and obedience to Christ, and His will, *as set forth plainly in the Word*—are being pressed and insisted upon, *in order to fellowship* of and with the saints at the Lord's table. We can not, and ought not to be subject to *such* requirements, and we dare not, and would not

join in even *seeming* to press such claims. They surely hinder from truly saying "grace and peace," "to *all who in every place* call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." 1 Cor., i. 2. Here in Sheffield we have acted in answer to our own responsibility to Christ. We have not discerned *His authority* in or for your rejection of the Saints at Peckham, as a whole Assembly, nor of our brother Goodall, who was in happy fellowship with us here many years, (Col., iv, 12,) as an individual. We have not *dared* therefore to refuse him at the *Lord's table*. And *because* we have met with him at the Lord's table, the Saints here as a whole are excommunicated by the Assembly at Rotherham. And to maintain or "promote the spirit of unity," as you speak, in the many meetings of Saints through the Country, this most unscriptural act is likely to be acquiesced in and confirmed. Ought this to be? Much that may be very consistent with "helping on the spirit of unity" may be quite opposed to the true and blessed "unity of the Spirit." Much that is put forth as *unquestionably true*, may be found, if tested, to be untenable. Some boasted "principles" may prove to be only "false principles." You have written to me, dear brother, and I have felt it due and right to answer plainly. I have written more largely than I purposed. For yourself, and many in London, dear brother Cronin especially, I entertain the greatest respect and the truest affection. I mourn over these breaches of fellowship, and I would pray the Lord to send "healing." I would affectionately ask, have *those* whose object you say is "to help on the spirit of unity in the London meetings" who are and have the place of "elders or shepherds," fulfilled their responsibilities as to the Saints at Peckham? See Ezek. xxxiv, 4, 16; Acts xx, 28; 1 Peter v, 1, 4. Was not that *you* did rather helping on division, than seeking to make peace and promote unity. See Pamphlet, p. 9. I was grieved with the close of your letter, "*God shall send them* strong delusion that they should believe a lie." Surely you do not, and would not refer this to the Saints, even to those you have separated and "put away."

Believe me still,

Very affectionately yours in Christ,

S. W. SPURR.

(From B. E. to S. W. S.)

Peckham, February 12th, 1864.

My dear beloved Brother,

The secret is now all out: your book and the association which was discovered last Lord's day, viz., that the Peckham meeting held with the loose-view brethren completely justify me before God in refusing fellowship with any such. Your letter was very kind: but alas! like Samson, you have allowed the hair—the glory to be taken from the Head, Christ Jesus, and, like Samson, whose eyes were put out by the Philistines, you are now all walking in darkness, not knowing whither you are going.

What made me say that the loose brethren believe a lie is, that they believe of the Saturday meeting as if it were true

that which is *most remote* from true. And you show by your letter to me that the Saturday meeting would have been *right* to accept and circulate that notice for those at Peckham, although they would then have been doing the very thing you blame them for. You doubt the truth of some parts of my letter. "Not quite accurate" are your words. I believe every word of it, because it speaks of facts which came under my own eyes, and *you* all believe what is perfectly untrue. I had never seen the remark "Troublous elements from all corners of London;" but I give my testimony to three out of the six principal parties at Peckham, having been great troublers of the Church for a long time.

In W. Goodall, of whom I know but little, I believe you have the most sincere and earnest, and consequently the most misguided of the party. How I sighed over the expressions of *hypocrisy* in that printed pamphlet you sent me.

I do not say it of the writer W. G., for he might have had grief (see page 8) "to the grief of many," and (page 12) "confidence had been shaken and brotherly love restrained in proportion."

Why, dear brother, long, long before, there had been the most inveterate biting and devouring all that were walking godly in the Church, and the mass of the Peckham meeting were *glad* to be able to *act in defiance* of such men as Brothers Wigram, Darby, and Cronin, whom they unjustly maligned! But the Lord is coming, and He will then manifest who are glorifying Him, and who are occupied with uniting a broken church.

It is a great mistake to say that we separated from Peckham: and if they *choose* to separate, are we to lord it over their consciences? But do not let them suppose they can walk with us with no *real communion with us*. God has no pretences: hollow insincere hearts will not do for Him. *He* must be glorified. Never was there a course so abandoned as to the fear of the Lord as that of Peckham; and that is why God stamps the sin of Korah upon it. They do exactly the same.

And now they have Mr. Stewart owned among them, who says, "The servant of the Lord cannot err." Why should *we* who are seeking to walk with God be falsely charged with Popery? I could not set forth the *whole* matter in my last letter, because I did not know it: but what I have set forth is perfectly true, and I regret that my brethren should believe a lie about the Saturday meeting. Why, dear brother, the brethren at that meeting are so particular not to take any authority, that if a notice is ill-worded, which might be misconstrued, they will not take upon themselves to make even a verbal alteration, but send it back for the local meeting to do it*. You talk much about our *unscriptural* acting; this is very wrong. Why, in the very act of not

* As to this we can testify what we know. A Sheffield brother was at the Saturday meeting, May 3rd, 1861. On that occasion G. V. W. himself *proposed* the notice that was sent out respecting the saints at Peckham. A member of this meeting told the same brother that what was *done there* they did with an *exercised* conscience. The latter would in effect be a *manifested will* which is something very like *authority*.

remonstrating with these brethren of which you complain, we are Scriptural.

You seem to have forgotten the words, "Reprove not a scorner lest he hate thee; rebuke a wise man and he will love thee."

You say the visits of W. G. brought upon you the solemn responsibility of acting. Yes, beloved brother, they did: but to act how—not to believe a *lie*. The glory of the Head has been slighted; then the Holy Ghost was grieved, and losing the power of that unction which would have kept you from seducing spirits and the many Anti-Christ, you have fallen into the trap which Satan set for your feet.

I have no more to say. I have warned you. You disregard the warning. I am clear from your blood: and I do not intend to maintain any further correspondence on the subject. I have told you the *truth*: and if I tell you the truth, what is the hindrance to your believing it?—even what I have said above.

I still regard you with the greatest affection, while I deplore that you should be so led astray. Communion of Christ with Belial is impossible.

Affectionately yours in the Lord,

BENJ. ELLIS.

P.S.—In reading the *book*, there was much of which I had before been wholly ignorant; but I made my comments all through the book as I read it, lest it should fall into the hands of any one who did not know the truth. I had to write "false" *seven times*, I think, as I went along.

Affectionately yours,

B. E.

(From S. W. S. to B. E.)

Beloved Brother in the Lord,

West-street, Sheffield, Feb. 23, '64.

It is with a feeling of real sadness that I reply to your second letter of the 12th instant. I desire not to wound your spirit by ungracious words—though your letter pained myself and the brethren, to whom I read it, greatly.

The secrets of the heart, my brother, are *not* open to every gaze. Only one can say, "I search the heart." That which you say of us with such cool *assurance*, I should dread to say of yourself, and the beloved brethren with you.

You tell me that "we have allowed the hair—the glory—to be taken from the Head, Christ Jesus, and that, like Samson, whose eyes were put out by the Philistines, we walk in darkness, not knowing where we go;" that "we have slighted the glory of the Head, grieved the Holy Spirit, and having lost the power of his unction, have been left a prey to seducing spirits, and the many Antichrists, and to fall into the trap Satan has set for our feet." Is not this judging before the time? (1 Cor. iv. 5.) Is it not getting out of place? (Rom. xiv. 4, 10, 13.) What! may we not question the perfect wisdom of yourselves, our fellow-

saints and fellow-servants before the Lord? may we not have the honest belief that, in "some few things," you may have mistaken the Lord's mind and will, and acted contrary to it? without your uncharitably and strongly asserting that "we have slighted the glory of the Head," and that God, denying Himself, acting contrary to His "eternal purpose" and unchanging love, has *sent us* strong delusion; that we, and our, and your fellow-saints at Peckham should believe *a lie*; and that we are left by the Holy Spirit to be the prey of seducing spirits, &c.

Is not this a sad, unsacred, carnal misjudgment and misapplication of Scripture?

We would not willingly slight yourself, or any of the "members of Christ." But, if it comes to be a question, as *it has*, between communion with Him and His thoughts, or you and yours; or between obedience to His revealed will or yours; we may not and ought not to slight Him, in order to please you. (Galatians i. 10.) In all things He has the pre-eminence.

It is wrong to assert such things of us, and of the saints at Peckham, because we deem it due and proper, in accordance with the measure of light He has given us, to walk in obedience to the Lord, and in uprightness before Him, rather than, in *pretence*, to seem to acquiesce in your thoughts, and to concur in that which, to say the least, we do not see to be right. (Luke xii. 47, 48.)

This may seem a slight upon yourselves; but how can it be a slight upon *the Lord*? I can only say, it seems to me very presumptuous, and apparently taking His place, to say that God *stamps* the sin of Korah—the sin of dire rebellion—upon His saints, who desire and seek to obey Him. The glory of the Head, Christ Jesus, is secure: God has taken care of that in Heaven. The Holy Ghost will maintain and guard it upon earth. It is not in our keeping; and though His name may be glorified in us, or may be dishonoured by us, I rejoice to know that the *allowing* the *glory* of the Head to be taken away does not rest with us or with you.

We cannot boast of bringing much glory to Him, but we rejoice to see Him glorified; and we desire in every way to own Him as "our Lord," and as "Lord of all." This is also, I believe, the desire of the Saints at Peckham, whom we *still* think you have unscripturally and unwarrantably "put away."

You tell me "the discovery that the Saints at Peckham hold with the loose-view brethren completely justifies you before God in refusing fellowship with them."

I think not, if you were not so before, as it seems to imply.

We do not know any of the Saints at Peckham, save Brother Goodall; and, of course, we know but little of their corporate action. Still, I think I am correct in saying that you have used a wrong word in regard to that you speak about. And wrong words convey wrong meanings. The claims of Christ in His Saints ought to be *owned* by His Saints. Surely you should admit this. I believe the Saints at Peckham, like ourselves, judge that they are bound to receive those whom Christ has

received, according to His will, and to *own* them, and have fellowship with them as His—at the Lord's table—if free from moral evil and corrupting doctrine. Rom. xv. 7, xiv. 1.

But mark, if you please, I say *own*. And when you say "*hold with,*" you say that which, I believe, goes beyond the truth. Yourself, and the Saints generally, in this way, still *own* the Lord's people from among the various sects around. And very many of them might be termed "loose-view brethren" as justly as those you speak about. Would it be true to say you were "holding with them" in their peculiarities and looseness because of your thus *owning* them at the Lord's table? This *owning* of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ was the ground we were on at first. And it is true ground still. But, as I said in my last, other claims beyond those of Christ are pressed now. Human requirements are insisted upon, in order to fellowship. You say, "Let them not think to walk *with us*, with *no* real communion *with us*, and pretend communion." This, I think, does not quite express your real meaning. *Some* communion in the things of Christ and of God, with them and us, you might surely find still; perhaps much. Phill. ii. 1. The hindrance, I doubt not, consists mainly in the fact that you are seeking for, and *requiring*, *full* sympathy and fellowship with *all* your own thoughts and ways, and quiet, unquestioning acquiescence in *all* your decisions. We should be very careful not to press for too much. "Unity of the Spirit" may yet, by God's grace, be found and enjoyed as a reality; its happy manifestation is always hindered by seeking for uniformity, and by setting aside conscience and spiritual intelligence, in requiring conformity, in order to have it. "*Lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, and forbearing one another in love,*" are *essential, indispensable accompaniments* in endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit. Eph. iv. 2. Failure in these things brings very much of the sadness and shame of "separating and separation." Evil amounting to the "leaven of malice and wickedness" the Lord plainly commands to be "put away." But He *as plainly* enjoins in the Church to "love as brethren, not rendering evil for evil, but contrariwise blessing," and the "forbearing one another." 1 Peter iii., 8, 9; Coll. iii. 12, 14. 1 Cor. v. shows that to *judge* and *put away*, in cases of open wickedness, those that *are so*, is right. 1 Cor. iv., and Rom. xiv., *show as plainly* that there are very many cases in which we are not and ought not "to judge one another." 1 Cor. iv., 3—5; Rom. xiv., 4, 10, 13, 18.

"Forbearing one another" means something, dear brother. Read in the light of Rom. xiv., 1 Cor. iv., vi., xiii.; we may be sure it means a great deal. Do not think for a moment that we would justify "evil workers." What we judge and say is—that we find no Scripture warrant and authority for your cutting off the assembly of saints at Peckham. The presence of the three you speak about so strongly does not justify your cutting off the *whole* assembly. Gen. xviii., 23—25; Eph. v., 1, 2; Rev. ii., 16, 22, 24.

If "long, long ago," as you tell me, they were "inveterate biters and devourers" of "all the godly"—we ask, why were they not "long, long ago" put away. A true bill might have been presented against them for this, and the indictment proved. Scripture directing how to deal with them could have been found easily. But their presence *in* the Assembly at Peckham, seeing you did not apparently find a sufficiently strong case against them to judge them "long, long ago," furnishes no stronger a reason for rejecting that Assembly than does the *owning* the claims of Christ in His Saints by their receiving them at the Lord's table.

You wish me to think, however, that you are acting scripturally in *all* that you do, and in *all* that you omit to do, even in not remonstrating with any of them. For the latter you quote, "Rebuke not a scorner." Do you set them all down as scorners then? Is this scriptural? Of our brother, W. G., the worst thing you seem inclined to say is, that he is "the most misguided of the party." You are even careful to say, when you speak of "sighing over the expressions of hypocrisy in the pamphlet," I do not say it of the writer W. G., he is the most sincere and the most earnest of the party. "Expressions of hypocrisy," and yet, the writer not a hypocrite, appear like contradictions. And yet, for giving him, W. G., *his* place at the Lord's table, which we cannot see he has forfeited by being only a "misguided person," (if your witness is true) *we are*, as a whole Assembly of Saints *excommunicated*. Heb. v., 2. And in doing this you say too, that we have "slighted the glory of the Head, Christ Jesus." And you tell me you have warned me against this (assumed) sin, and complacently say, "you are clear from our blood;" and clear too you count yourselves also as to the saints at Peckham.

I am not the judge as to this. 2 Cor. v., 10. I was not thinking of "remonstrances" only when I asked whether yourself and those with you, who are "the elders," had fulfilled their responsibilities to them. Did *any* of you *ever* go to East-street to help by a word of exhortation, or of comfort, or instruction, or by a look of brotherly confidence and love? This not trying to help, and then "putting away," and leaving them, the saints or sheep of Christ to what may happen, saying complacently "you are clear," is not like good and faithful shepherding. Paul did not so. He "*ceased not*" to warn every one night and day with tears. Acts xx., 28—32. I hope that while you so pertinaciously say of some that "God stamps the sin of Korah upon them, for they do just the same"—the sin of the shepherds of Israel may in no sense be stamped upon you through your doing in any way the same. Ez. xxxiv., 10. The flock will be cared for. Ez. xxxiv., 11—16; John x., 16, 27, 59. "The Lord is coming," as you say. And I trust "when the Chief Shepherd shall appear," you, and the dear brethren with you, who I doubt not *are* elders, will receive from Him the "crown of glory that fadeth not away." I do not think the sad mistakes I fear you are making in some things ("encompassed here with failure") will be allowed to hinder if there be true-heartedness. "The counsels of the heart" are the great thing in that day.

“And there were shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them.”

Something like this will soon be seen again. Happy those who are found so watching then. Matt. xxiv., 42—47; Luke xii., 37.

We shall meet them, dear brother. Our judgment or *mis*-judgment of each other during this “man’s day,” will be of little moment then. I trust Christ the Lord about all that. 1 Cor. i., 8. It will be a happy meeting, and attended with most cordial greeting—all mournful separations and divisions, fruit of our follies and our faults, for ever done with.

I need not add more. For myself and brethren I can say, that if we are mistaken we trust to be brought to see it, and that we may have grace to own it. But there seems to be no desire for healing. As our correspondence is to close—I say farewell! I can only remember you with affection when I think of what has been—with sorrow when I think of what is now—and with joy when I think of what soon will be. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, dear brother. Forgive any seeming ungracious word, and believe me still,

Very affectionately yours in the Lord,

S. W. SPURR.

P.S.—Our brother, Goodall, would, I am sure, be glad to own and correct any wrong or “false” statements if they were seventy times seven. Let me beg of you to send the marked “pamphlet to him.”

A third letter was received from Mr. Ellis, but being of the same character as the others we do not publish it.

COPY OF CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN J. N. DARBY AND
S. W. S., ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

London, Nov. 1863.

My dear Brother,

You will not be surprised if on my return to Europe, and naturally anxious about all the brethren, I was concerned to hear all was in question in Sheffield. I do not of course pretend to judge anything, for I do not know the least what has passed. It is simply my natural anxiety that I express to you with whom I staid when there, and when I say all in question, I use it in the most general way, as I am ignorant, and write because I am and with that anxious, as I surely ought to be where brethren are concerned. I do not know, *i.e.*, have forgotten your address, so send this to Stanley, who I take for granted will.

Affectionately yours in the Lord, J. N. D.

Sheffield, Nov. 30th, 1863.

Beloved Brother in the Lord,

Severe domestic affliction and pressure of occupation and trial have prevented me from writing before this morning. I can only now send a few lines. I thank you most heartily for the few lines you have sent, as being a token of brotherly love and

concern. I have made known the contents of your note to the brethren, and they are also grateful and desire to join in truest Christian love and remembrance. In reply to the statement that "all is in question" at Sheffield, I will only say that as to the blessed and perfect ways of God, the precious things of Christ, and the authority and sufficiency of Scripture used and applied in the power and wisdom of the Spirit of God, nothing is in question. *But in regard to some of the present and past actings of "brethren" and some of the principles upon which those actings are based, we have had for many months past real difficulties and questionings, which have led us to long continued exercise of heart and mind and prayerful and careful consideration of them in the light of the Word of God. We know we are among the weakest and simplest of the Lord's people, but we earnestly desire "to purify our souls in obeying the truth" according to our own measure of light. We have sought several times the help and fellowship of brethren at Rotherham in enquiring into matters about which we were exercised, but were peremptorily refused on the ground that we ought unquestioningly to own and bow to all that has been done as being of the Holy Ghost. This we cannot do with a good conscience. We have given to our brother Goodall, one of the Saints connected with the Peckham and late East-street gatherings, the place at the Lord's table he has had with us for many years. Rotherham consequently I believe has or will cut us off individually and corporately. Whole gatherings of saints cut off—simply for difference of judgment!! My beloved brother, is this a true principle? You know well how we have looked up to you, how we have honoured and honoured you, because of the help and comfort in the understanding of the ways and things of God, we have derived by your means. When I say we, I mean saints generally. I do not think it needful to enter into details. I only say we cannot see such a principle to be right.* Brethren, however, desire me to say that papers will be shortly sent you for perusal, in connection with the matters that have exercised us, and from them you will understand our present thoughts and judgment.*

I remain as ever, yours very affectionately in Christ,

S. W. S.

London, Dec., 1863.

My dear Brother,

Thanks for your note. I shall of course read the correspondence the brethren send me, and thank them for doing so, and the Lord willing will write when I have read it. It is evident I ought to say nothing fully till then. But allow me to remark that your note does not quite estimate the state of the case. *Suppose* we excommunicate a person here (*a*) and you receive him at Sheffield. It is evident you have denied us here as a body gathered in Christ's name (*b*) and acting by his authority, (*c*) for that is what discipline hangs upon. Further, the unity of the body is denied wholly. (*d*) It is clear if I have a part as

(*a*) Say—contrary to the Lord's will. (*b*) No! (*c*) In this case. (*d*) Not at all.

faithful to Christ in excluding a person here, I cannot have one in another place in breaking bread with him there. Brethren united in the name of the Lord are not infallible, and remonstrance may be all right, (e) but if a person is to be received in one place who is rejected in another, it is evident there is an end to unity and common action. I do not say that excommunication is the whole case. I only reply to the statement you make as to differing in judgment. If rejecting be anything it is the Church of God rejecting by the Lord's authority some evil person from the Church—for his good perhaps. If another set of Christians receive him it is clear that they do not own the other body as acting under the Lord's authority, nor their having acted as a Church where the Holy Ghost is. In the truth of the case, if I am to speak of the case, you have rejected and cut off all the brethren in London as an assembly. (f) How could I hold with the rejection of a person here and his reception at Sheffield. When deliberately done it is evidently impossible. If I am out of communion with him here, and in communion with him there, the unity of the body is gone. And where is the authority of the Lord, (g) not in both. Your act is distinctly a condemnation of the whole body in London as not acting under the Lord's authority, and in a point which affects the communion of every person in it. The thing is plain enough—have you considered it.

Affectionately yours in Christ,

J. N. D.

No person for example who had been put out, or who had deliberately separated themselves from Rotherham or Sheffield, would have been received here. (h) They would have been separated from the unity of the body there, if we viewed you there as representing it, and would not be in that unity here.

Sheffield, January 30th, 1864.

Beloved Brother in the Lord,

According to promise I send herewith one of the first copies of "Correspondence" received. The printer has kept it in hand several weeks longer than we expected. Brethren wish me to express their regret that it has been so long delayed. They purposed and desired you should have had it much sooner.

From the perusal of the pamphlet you will perceive the whereabouts of our present position. We trust you will weigh and judge the whole case as in the Lord's presence, and as far as you can with His judgment. Be assured, beloved brother, our only desire is truly to know and honestly to do His will. It is very painful to us to be in collision with our brethren, and to be cut off from fellowship and communion with those we love and esteem,—many of them, and none more than yourself, very highly—for their work's sake. But to "sanctify the Lord himself, and

(e) And brethren all wrong—in which case a little special right action would be far better than common wrong action. (f) This is a perversion of truth. (g) We ask where? (h) Some years back a brother put out at Sheffield and Rotherham, was received in London and by J. N. D. himself.

to let Him be our fear and dread," is our first, our most solemn and precious consideration. I need scarcely say anything in reply to your letter of December 2nd. What you say there does not meet or answer the questions that have exercised us in regard to the acts and ways of some of the London brethren. *Your arguments are without force if the acts of the London brethren are not in accordance with the Lord's will.* They could not in that case be by *His authority.* And this it is that has been the question with us, and it ought to be the question with all. Our brethren in Rotherham and many more would settle it by positive assertions that brethren in London *must* have acted by the Holy Ghost, and that to raise any question or attempt any examination is not only needless but sinful; rebellion against the Spirit's rule. "Hear the Church," too, is pressed in a manner that savours very much of the Romish way of using it. But you tell us in your letter that "brethren united in the name of the Lord *are not infallible.* Then they *may be wrong.* You say they may be remonstrated with. But believing them to be *wrong* and acting *contrary to the Lord's will,* as we do, could we, with uprightness, or ought we to sanction and confirm by our acts their wrong judgment and course of conduct? And failing to acquiesce in what they do that we may keep a clear conscience before the Lord, do we necessarily thereby as you assert break the unity of the body. Is the unity of the body (of Christ) dependent upon exact agreement in those who compose it as to every point of doctrine or of practice? Is it a bond of discipline that holds the body together? Be assured we have no thought of cutting off our brethren, as you say we do, or of denying that they belong to Christ and have the Spirit in them and with them, though we cannot look upon them and own them and their decisions and ways as infallible. We have our own responsibilities to the "One Lord." Others can not measure them or prescribe or fulfil them, or they would not be ours. In answer to them according to our measure of light, we are in our present position. Cast out and cut off from fellowship with our brethren—if the act of our brethren at Rotherham be concurred in—it seems somewhat hard and quite unjust for it to be asserted of us (*untruly* most certainly) that we cut off our brethren. This is not the fact, affirm it who will. It is not for us to point out the course you should pursue in the present state of things amongst brethren. We would however express our judgment that a most solemn responsibility rests upon you. Hundreds, thousands even, will listen to you who would listen to none besides. Perhaps the present is a solemn crisis in the history of the Saints gathered in the name of Christ. We have reason to believe that many are troubled. In many hearts and consciences there is we think an echo of the Lord's words, "Remember from whence thou art fallen and repent and *do the first works.*" If it could be, or even as far as it could be, we feel that healing "would be for the Lord's glory, and for the good and comfort of the saints," and it might turn for a testimony to many. "Is there no balm in Gilead."

In the confidence of brotherly love and in the fulness of truest godly respect and honour, we dare earnestly to beg and entreat of you carefully and prayerfully to review that which has been and is among the Saints, in connection with which you have had and have by far the largest place and the greatest influence, in the earnest hope and desire that the Lord may use you to hinder any further breaches of fellowship and to bring about a large measure of restored and renewed communion amongst those who truly desire to do the Lord's will, and to answer to the grace and truth, and holiness and love, by which He would have His people known to each other and in the world. We shall hope and pray that the Lord may use and guide you in a course that will have this happy result. I will only add in explanation, that while relinquishing the so-called Bethesda test, as being only a *human rule and obligation*, we have no thought of going over to Bethesda as it is termed. What we mean is, that we neither could nor would tolerate that which we know the Lord condemns, or sanction or allow that which we know He would have us hinder and prevent. More I might add, but it is, I think, needless, as our thoughts are expressed in the accompanying pamphlet. I therefore conclude.

I will venture to express our hope that we may yet have the pleasure of seeing you amongst us at some future time.

The brethren join me in very much love to yourself.

I remain, as ever, dear Brother,

Affectionately yours in Christ,

S. W. S.

Pan. Basses Pyrenées, France,

February 19th, 1864.

My dear Brother,

I have received your letter but not the pamphlet, which I shall carefully read when I shall have the opportunity. In my former letter I could only speak of general principles as I had not the correspondence. I can still only refer to the contents of your letter as I have not the pamphlet, which is not so easily forwarded as a letter. But your letter itself involves so many important principles that I answer in certain respects, though I have not the correspondence (with Rotherham I suppose.) I must avow to you that it does not furnish me much hope of any issue. I am sometimes surprised at the little apprehension brethren have of the bearing of their acts. You ask, "Is it a bond of discipline that holds the body together"? I answer, in practice, undoubtedly. (a.) *The unity of the body is in itself immutable. It is divinely maintained and for ever.* But the manifested unity (b.) of the body here below is maintained by discipline, and cannot be without, though in secret it be God's power which does so by its efficacious working. What has created Nationalism, that is the dispersion of saints in a crowd of worldly professors, but the absence of discipline,—of maintaining by it the sanctity of the Lord's Table. But to come more directly to the shape in which this question applies to you. *Suppose* you let in delibe-

(a) Ponder the sentence that follows and what it involves.

(b) Query? Unity or purity.

rately the Mormons. How can other assemblies walk with you. Are you to impose the reception of wickedness on all the Church of God? (c.) *Suppose* you deliberately admit fornicators. Are we to continue in unity? You will say you have no right to suppose such things. I have a perfect right to judge a principle by plain strong cases. But I have chosen one here which has been publicly insisted on by a meeting standing on the principle you have adopted. (d) *Suppose* you receive blasphemers and heretics, are we to remain united with you? It is anxiously insisted on in a tract published by Yapp, that no assembly can be defiled by receiving evil, but only the individuals who accept it. But your letters, as does that tract, makes independent churches, each acting for itself. If this be the case, the unity which constituted the whole being of brethren is wholly given up. That for which I left the Establishment is wholly gone. All this I repeat wholly and absolutely. The circumstances I do not pretend to know, for I was in America, but if I have rightly gathered them you have had a correspondence with Rotherham, but none with the brethren in London. It is quite possible I may be mistaken in this. But if I am right, see the position you have taken. You have judged the conduct of brethren in London without having heard what they have to say. I understood the breach arose between you and Rotherham by reason of your reception of Goodall. With the main facts of his case I am acquainted, for I took part in what passed. And now allow me to put the case as it stands as to him. I put it merely as a principle. He (or any one else) is rejected in London. The Assembly in London have weighed (and I with them) (e) the case, and count him either as excommunicated or in schism. (f) I put the two cases, for I only speak of the principle. *I take part* in this act, (g) and hold him to be outside the Church of God on earth, being outside (in either case) what represents it in London. (h) I am bound by Scripture to count him so. I come to Sheffield. There he breaks bread, and is—in what? *Not in the Church of God on earth, for he is out of it in London and there are not two churches on earth, cannot be*, so as to be in one and out of another. (i) How can I refuse to eat with him in London and break bread with him in Sheffield, have one conscience for London another

(c) Instead, *suppose* you in London deliberately and wickedly reject Godly Saints and tried servants of Christ—Are we to join in that? That is “*the case as it applies to us.*”

(d) The assertion is without proof. The suppositions and the naughty imputation without truth.

(e) Which! when! where! The whole statement is untrue.

(f) *i.e.* His guilt is—anything you please—after “the assembly and I with them have weighed the case.”

(g) “Knowing nothing of the circumstances,” for “I was in America,” he says above.

(h) Suppose he was *wrongly* put out as was the fact. These letters prove it. If there had been the Lord’s authority for what was done, Mr. D. would be quick to shew it. We should not have had all these *suppositions* and putting things as “a principle.”

(i) So if the Church of God makes a mistake, or receives one wrongly put away (3 John 10.), it is destroyed. “There are not two churches on earth,” &c. Is this logic, or scripture, or J.N.D.s. mysticism?

for Sheffield, believe the Spirit judges one way at London, another way at Sheffield. It is confusion and disorder. I do not apprehend I am mistaken in saying you received Goodall without having the reasons or motives of the Priory or other brethren in London. If you have had their reasons the case is only stronger, because you have deliberately condemned the gathering in London, and rejected its communion, for he who is outside in London is inside with you. But there is another point comes out in your letter. The case of Goodall and East street, referred to Mr. Stewart, and their ways as to him, which led to their breaking up there. I never doubted a moment that running down that channel they would run into that terrible sink of evil, Bethesda. But your letter apprises me that you have already taken the ground of neutrality, but neutrality (as Mr. Stewart himself once justly answered) between Christ and evil is worse than anything. "He that is not for me is against me," says Christ. The evil at Bethesda is the most unprincipled admission of blasphemers against Christ, the coldest contempt of Him, I ever came across. All their efforts to excuse and hide it only make the matter worse. All who do not abhor the whole system and all connection with it are already entangled and defiled. It is, I am satisfied, a mere net of Satan (though many Christians may be entangled in it.) Every question of churches and of unity disappear before the question of Bethesda. It is a question of Christ. Faith governed my path as to it, but I have seen its fruits in America, the West Indies, France, Switzerland, and in a measure in India. I have seen it the spring and support everywhere of unprincipledness and evil, and all who were under its influence turned from uprightness and truth. I have found persons unknown to each other and strangers to our conflicts in England, unite in testimony that they could get nothing honest from those who were connected with it, or who did not openly reject it all. Wherever the difficulty has been, persons going on badly and in the flesh were induced to fall in with it or follow in the line in which you have entered. (*j*) But before I go further on this point allow me to recur to your letter. You say, "Your arguments are without force if the acts of the London brethren are not in accordance with the Lord's will. They could not in that case be *by His authority*. And this it is that has been the question with us." Who is the judge of whether these acts were so or not? (*k*) This only means that you at Sheffield consider yourselves competent to judge the brethren in London, though you were not there to know what passed, nor, allow me to think, have not in any way been fully informed of what took place. You must forgive me if I think this somewhat questionable. You will say are our consciences to be bound by the action of the brethren in London.

(*j*) Wholesale railing and false witness can not excuse and cover up the sin of wholesale excision of saints, who do not and would not receive blasphemers or tolerate evil,—but who love Christ. There is plenty of the coldest contempt of Christians that does not greatly honour or please Christ.

(*k*) This is an unworthy evasion, not an answer. Yet it is the one important point that measures and tests the value of the specious reasoning that follows.

I answer, *prima facie*, certainly, or there can be and is no common action. I admit remonstrances,—and if it comes to an absolute necessity through deliberate wrong,—breaking with, a gathering, but slighting the judgment of another body in ordinary cases is denying its being competent to decide for Christ and with Christ, and asserting your own competency to judge it without having been acquainted with what passed. You say, “We have our own responsibilities to the Lord. Others cannot measure them.” What are you doing as to London? You have set aside the judgment of London as null and nought before the Lord. You do not say the individuals have not the Spirit, but you have rejected their corporate action. How can the two bodies get on together. You receive a person because he is in communion in London, that is, you own the body as a competent witness of Christ’s mind, without saying it is infallible. You own the body, its acts; you wish to be in communion with it; you must then recognize its other acts. I recognize the full liberty in you, as having also the Spirit as a part of Christ’s body, led to act by it in remonstrating or enlightening but not to disown it on your own authority, and then to pretend to own it still, and speak of being in communion with it. (l) But what you say as to Bethesda, though only, as I have said, what I expected, shows your position far more clearly. You must not deceive yourselves dear brother. Where Christ is in question there is no middle ground. You have separated yourselves from the brethren in the course they have taken. You think yourselves wiser than they. I have seen these pretensions elsewhere. I know their result. It is in vain to say you do not. If you did not you would not act differently from them. You cannot remain alone though you have really taken the position of an independent Church. But the question is largely before the saints now. Is union founded on truth or not? The Scripture tells me it is. You have abandoned that ground, with the pretension to keep it better than others. You are not the first. I do not trust you to do so. You have given up your testimony against evil but pretend to keep it out. (m) I do not trust your

(l) There is no pretence. We may have fellowship in all right things, and yet refuse to join in *one* thing that is contrary to the Lord’s will. Mr. D. repeats many times that “*he admits remonstrance.*” We ought to be thankful I dare say. But *he* at the same time *requires compliance.* We may be *dissenters*, but we must not be *non-conformists.* Would Paul admit remonstrance (1 Cor. v., 11, 13), or John require conformity? (3 John 9, 11.)

(m) We make no pretence of trusting ourselves to keep evil out. We look to the Lord to deliver and preserve us from it. Is there no evil to be found in those assemblies where your Bethesda discipline is fully carried out? Are there no pretences with yourselves? Is it not a sham and pretence to suppose that *your Bethesda* test has kept out a particle of evil anywhere? It has brought an immense amount in, and works evil and mischief every day and every hour. A mass of Scripture precepts are made of non-effect by it, and it cannot be proved to have caused anything but what has been dishonouring to Christ, and defiling and distressing to Saints. Scripture directs how and when to reject “evil persons” &c. Your so-called Bethesda discipline leads only to the rejection of Godly Saints and honoured servants of Christ—(J.L.H. among the number) whom you and your followers also defame and slander. It is an iniquity that ought instantly to be swept away.

pretension to do so. Here I must speak plain, because it is not brethren but Christ who is in question. I see the worst and most ruinous effects springing up daily from what I judged in principle sixteen years ago. In this path you will soon be the active supporters of indifference to Christ's glory, and covering and excusing the dishonour done to his name. I can easily suppose you will not believe me in this. I only answer, if you continue in it you shall see. I can only say I have seen enough to be content to be burned with God's grace, rather than enter into it. I am quite aware too these will count what I say as to Bethesda a spirit of party and so forth. I let them say it. The Lord will judge all that. But I know for myself what I say and why I say it. Your position now is that with your new light you condemn the course brethren have pursued. I am persuaded—as persuaded as that I am sitting here—that the supposed new light is the darkness of Satan on your soul. I regret and mourn that you should think it a human rule to break with those who receive and countenance blasphemers, and seek to hush and cover it all up. To me what you call a human rule is the first obligation which rests on me as a Christian. Wisdom in discipline all may call in question*—fidelity to Christ is at the root of all our conduct. Your letter produces the effect in me of your having become an independent church—so called. Of course I have no such principles, but what you say as to Bethesda is the first step and in fact save God's gracious hand, the whole way to the coldest contempt of Christ I ever came across. I thank the brethren at Sheffield for their pamphlet. I suppose I shall, the Lord willing, be in England in about a month, and indeed in Yorkshire. I shall read it of course carefully, and if any communication is required, I will of course write, but I do not conceal from you that your letter produces in me the impression that before then you will have gone so far in the road you have entered, that all communication will be useless. God will judge who has been faithful to Him, Sheffield or those it condemns. Where that road leads I have no doubt. Satan is making a great effort at present to shake brethren as to these points, but this only makes me more firm.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,

J. N. D.

March, 1864.

My dear Brother,

I have returned for a time to England, and read the correspondence you have sent me. I was quite mistaken as to its nature. I thought it was in a great measure between Rotherham and you. I have very little to reply. You have thought at Sheffield you are competent to judge a large body of brethren in London in fact and in principle. I doubt it. Attorney cleverness is not the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. I am not acquainted with the details of East-street as I was not there, and during the later communications, I suppose out of England. But in the main of what passed I can not be ignorant. All that is morally material is left out. You profess to have enquired in

* And be certainly excommunicated for doing so.

London from some, whom I know not. One thing is quite certain, you have never heard what you have judged about. (a) I might express my surprise that you have not perceived that the letter of Mr. Goodall is a direct contradiction of his charges, which are only a repetition of what I have heard a hundred times from the party. Had the Sheffield brethren been more humble they would have escaped what I judge to be a sad fall. The account makes one thing evident, that somehow or other East-street was in such a state that it came to nothing. (b) But I am not going to try to state the facts, as I know them to have passed where I am acquainted with them, because I think it useless. You have decided for yourselves without hearing or seeking to hear it—and my judgment is that often if there has been a course of evil of a certain character, the best thing is to leave it to God and the fruits of its own ways and not to meddle with it at all. (c) I might perhaps have been led to have attempted it out of love to individuals, but Mr. Goodall's principles which you have adopted, are as stated in the letter, as to the Church, the opposite of what I hold dear, and so far from instructing me or returning to old principles, were they adopted I should leave the meetings of brethren in London, if alone. I am perfectly aware what was attempted. If he ever had the principles of brethren he is blind to what was attempted. And further, the course he takes and you adopt as to Bethseda, I look upon as the worst kind of infidelity to Christ, and exactly the evil which Christians have specially to avoid in the present day. I think you have fallen into the snare of the devil, and can only earnestly hope that the gracious Lord will deliver you each individually out of it. I have only to add that in those you judge, while I doubt not there was defect, and some mistakes committed which those who sought evil were glad of course to profit by, I was only thankful in the main for the patience and grace shown in as harassing and heartless course of evil as it ever came to my lot to witness, and they are through mercy reaping the fruit of it. I doubt a good deal that even all is told as to Peckham, but as I have only heard and have never sought to verify it, nor intend to do so, I do not enter into it. (d) You must excuse me if after the circulation, practical publication of your pamphlet, I decline any reference further to your corporate action. Of course individuals whom I can serve I am bound and willing to do so.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,

J. N. D.

(a) We had information from G. V. W., and others of the Saturday Meeting. Mr. Ellis' letters we now publish, and the history of the case is in the pamphlet referred to.

(b) The giving up the meetings at East-street and Peckham, in no way affects the question of "cutting off" wrongfully the saints composing them, and who are still outside.

(c) This course might have been pursued in London.

(d) In these letters there is no attempt to prove or show from Scripture that brethren in London acted according to the Lord's will, or that we have acted contrary thereto. The former is unquestioningly assumed, and the latter is unjustly asserted by Mr. D. and his followers.

Sheffield, September, 1866.

Dear brother in the Lord.

I did not reply to your last two letters. To have done so privately would have been useless. I have been asked many times to publish the Correspondence, and one with Mr. B. Ellis. Various considerations that I need not state, and especially an article of yours which I have just seen in the August number of the *Treasury*, entitled "Ecclesiastical Independency," convince me that I ought now to comply with the request. I judge it right therefore, though near three years have passed since their reception, to reply in some sort to your letters, connecting them with the paper I refer to,—but in a public way. Into the details of them I need not and shall not enter. They are full of reasoning, but contain very little Scripture. You deal largely in suppositional cases, but there is no answer to the matter of fact questions at issue. Your supposed cases seem to sustain your argument that one Assembly of God should submit to the judgment and acts of another. But to apply your argument drawn from a *supposed* case of true and Scriptural action to sustain a *real* case of wrong and unscriptural action, is logically and morally bad. In your *Treasury* article your purpose is evidently the same as in your letters to us; and Sheffield was in your mind, I doubt not, in writing it. There you say, "But if an Assembly have judged as such in a case of discipline, admitting all brotherly communications and remonstrances, (!) I distinctly say another Assembly should on the face of it receive their act. If the wicked man is put out at Corinth, is Ephesus to receive him? Where then is unity? Where the Lord in the midst of the Church? What led me out of the Establishment was the unity of the body; where it is not owned and acted upon I cannot go. And Independent Churches I think quite as bad or worse of than of the Establishment. But if each Assembly acts and judges independently of another, then it has rejected that unity. They are independent Churches. There is no practical unity of the body." Leaving the latter part of your statement, I beg you distinctly to understand that "when an Assembly *as such* has judged" and "put away a *wicked* person," as at Corinth, we admit another Assembly "should receive their act." For the action is in the Lord's name, according to His plainly-expressed will, and by His authority. To refuse it would be to disobey the Lord. But how when, as in the case in question, the action is contrary to the Lord's will? Is another Assembly still to "receive their act?" Here and in Rotherham our brother Goodall was with us many years preaching the gospel and ministering very acceptably to the Saints. And since his residence in London his visits have been always welcome. The Lord *bids us* greatly to honour and love such. (1 Thess. v., 12, 13.) He is expelled in London. Not as a *wicked* person. There is no charge of evil, (1 Tim., v., 19.) but the very opposite, as Mr. Ellis's letters show. But you bid us refuse him at the *Lord's* table, and mark him off as a *wicked* person, in the presence of those to whom he has so long ministered,

(l) See note page 24.

thus taking away his character and place as a Christian and as a Servant of the Lord. And so as to all the rest, who with him and like ourselves, have been excommunicated wholesale, after the manner of Rome, but not after the manner of the New Testament. "To receive the act," is, in such cases, to disobey the Lord.

Rome consistently claims obedience on the ground of infallibility. You tell us, "Brethren met in the name of the Lord are not infallible," and yet inconsistently claim obedience to *all* their decisions. But I ask you and those with you, where is the authority *in this act* that it should bind others, or *for it* that it should have been done at all? To use your own words—Has any "Assembly *as such* judged and so decreed? Is it the act of the Priory, or any of the London meetings? I believe not! It is in fact, as is shown in the pamphlet sent you, the act of the Saturday Ecclesiastical Synod, "the six or seven clever intelligent Christians" you refer to in your paper whose rule and action you there contradistinguish from *true* Church action. By *careful enquiry* and patient and prayerful examination, we are assured the fallible brethren in London have done very wrong. We therefore hearkened to the Lord and not to them, and did His will and not theirs.

Doing the Lord's will is not the proud assertion of our "right of private judgment," as you try to lead people to believe. You proclaim *now* the authority of the Church. Nay, you contend that a small Assembly even, has authority to make laws—to receive and reject persons and Assemblies, *how* and *for what* it pleases—and that all other Assemblies are bound "to receive its acts." Be they right or wrong, another Assembly must not judge. To do so would be to act independently—to break the unity of the body. So you teach. You would have it believed that our only excuse for non-acquiescence with what was done in London results from "confounding authority with infallibility," which is you say "a poor and transparent piece of sophistry." You mistake. We are not sophists. First: No Assembly *as such* has judged. Second: No Assembly has any authority to bind others by its decisions, apart from the will and Word of the Lord. To make such authority of any use, a standard or metropolitan Assembly would be needed. Else what is to be done when Assemblies differ, having equal authority and equal privileges? Is the Assembly at Sheffield less privileged than any other? It has judged carefully before the Lord in this matter. Probably no other "gathering" has done so. For doing this, Rotherham without spending an hour in consideration, or waiting upon the Lord for guidance, excommunicated us. Be it so. We owe obedience to the Lord, and not to the Church. Though you say not, Scripture I am assured teaches that Christ *is* Lord *in* the Church and *of* the Church. (1 Cor. i. 2., Eph. v. 24., 1 Peter iii. 6.) If an Assembly rejects a drunkard, or receives a believer, we "receive the act" because in it they obey the Lord, and their Lord, or Head if you please, is ours and supreme in every Assembly of Saints that form the "one body," in and to which there is only "one Lord." But if it acts contrary to the Lord's will, we must obey Him and not it. Your argument to

prove authority is contradictory. The parent's authority is absolute ; the magistrate's, executive. You plead as though the Church, or a small Assembly even, had both kinds. If so the one might nullify the other. You speak, further on in your paper, of the judicial authority of the Church. Such is executive only, to put in force the directions of the Lord's word—the *law* that governs every Assembly of Saints and every saint therein. This we admit. But when you plead that a small part has legislative authority to bind the whole, we say—No! Scripture does not teach so. "Prove all things" is our warrant for examining in this or in any case, whether what is done is according to the Lord's will.

Excommunication of Assemblies commenced at Bethesda. Where and when is it to end? Brethren were led to it, I am convinced, not by any Scripture direction, but by a circular issued by yourself. The plea of fidelity to Christ urged in it came home to the heart, and many were very zealous. It was, I now believe, zeal without judgment—brethren were *mised* and *took a wrong course*. Christ is faithful to his saints. He pleads for them and loves them to the end. (John xiii. 1.) Fidelity to Him is shown in caring for them. (John, xxi., 15, 17.) Excommunication is only for extreme naughtiness, and may not be resorted to as or for what we think fit. Drunkards, blasphemers, and those who teach or hold bad or corrupting doctrine, are to be "cut off." Scripture directs it. Every Assembly you have "cut off" would do it. But to reject the righteous with the guilty, the unconsenting hearer with the bad teacher, is not the Lord's will or the Lord's way. (1 Cor., v., 11, 13.; Rev. ii., 16, 22, 24.) Corrupting doctrine is very subtle, often mixed with much truth, and difficult to detect. For a very long time it was undiscovered at Plymouth. But to speak of the Assembly and all in it being identified with bad doctrine, or with those who teach it—save as it is assented to and consented with—is as foolish as it is unscriptural. "He that biddeth him *God speed* is partaker of his evil deeds." This implies hearty assent and concurrence. Why strain and misuse it. The Assembly may be in a low condition and not judge as quickly as it ought. Corinth was so with all its gifts. Allow that there was carelessness at Bethesda or elsewhere ; does Scripture enjoin that the Assembly should be "cut off," and *all* the sheep of Christ in it be *left* and excommunicated too, thus shutting them up to the bad doctrine? To me it seems a sad mistake. The Good Shepherd does not leave the sheep when danger threatens. Does Acts xx., 17—22 teach a course like this when evil men enter in and perverse men spring up? "God and the Word of His grace" are the resource pointed to there. Teaching the truth hinders the reception or retention of false doctrine, and would lead to its being judged.

But you and your followers have gone further. Every Assembly that would not join in your course, though believing it to be contrary to the Lord's will, you have also "cut off." The reception of a Saint, however simple, from such a Meeting would bring defilement on all in the Assembly that did it, that would put its members *outside*, and cause them to be looked upon as

more defiling than pitch. It is hard to say whether the cruelty or the fanaticism in this course is greatest. To reject Saints—whole Churches at a time—to brand them as evil doers—and to tell them because they refuse to join in this, that they are guilty of the “coldest contempt of Christ,”—to be crying out constantly that they are walking with “blasphemers,” which you must know to be perfectly untrue—to seek as you do in these letters to take away their characters as men even by wholesale slander and defamation,—and to lead and teach others from your influential position as a Servant of Christ to act towards and speak and think thus of their fellow Christians,—is *so bad*, so thoroughly *opposed* to the Lord’s gracious thoughts and work and holy ways—that I do not venture to characterise it. The poor brethren are sadly deceived and ensnared by yourself, G. V. W., and the other leaders (many of them misled) who “cause them to err.” The Lord will, I trust, soon make them to see the iniquity of this course and deliver them from it. In it you profess to act for “the glory of Christ.” On the same plea heretics were burned of old and all sorts of persecutions carried on. In reality it greatly dishonours the Lord and injures His people. Christ’s object is “to gather together in one the children of God.” The effect of this so called discipline has been strife, discord, mischief, and evil speaking and thinking—that should lead to shame and humiliation before the Lord—and that shew plainly that it is not of Christ but of Satan. And for what? Eighteen years have passed—and in all those Assemblies you have “cut off”—where (as is said constantly) “the evil has not been judged,” how many can you find “leavened” with the “bad doctrine” of Newton. Where are those that have sympathy with it—where those that teach it? If anything at all like it was taught, or printed—it would, I am sure, have been published far and wide by yourself or some of your zealous coadjutors. You and they know that it is condemned and would not be tolerated by those who are charged with “not having judged the evil.” There is proof enough that the leaven is not working in those Assemblies, and that that which you tell us “is just the evil Christian have to guard against,” is not easy to find where you point to as its seat. If brethren were a little more humble, they would not continue blind to their own inconsistency. Judging others unsparingly, they condemn themselves. The laxity of Bethesda though of short duration, they never cease speaking about. B. W. N.’s bad doctrine was speedily condemned at Bethesda. Years have passed, and in the most careless way—without examination, they are sanctioning in yourself what they so loudly condemn in B. W. N. For your own writings contain doctrines so like Newton’s, that simple and even wise Christians cannot tell the difference. I did not know it until some months after I last wrote to you—but I now believe your doctrines as to Christ’s sufferings are quite as dishonouring to Christ as Newton’s. If you did not suggest them to him, as some think, you are certainly in the same condemnation with him. You ought, I judge, to confess your writings on this subject to be sinful and Christ

dishonouring. For your devotedness and for the help you have rendered to the Saints, I still greatly honour and esteem you. I should be sorry to say you are a blasphemer. Over speculation has probably given rise to your sad mistakes. At any rate your writings are plainly and largely and increasingly challenged. Brethren I think will be made to feel that they must judge them, and they will need as you do, to clear themselves in regard thereto. Meantime it would seem more becoming to say less against others. Many believe that the secret of your constant efforts to justify all these *wrong* doings is to be found in your having originated them and sustained them all through. Your conscience tells you as your letter suggests, that your proceedings are such as result from "party spirit and so forth." The conviction that *it is so* grows stronger. I have seen a circular of yours in which you own that you *acted in the flesh* in making the division at Plymouth in 1846. "You ought" you said, "to have waited longer." A humbling admission surely—that the sad division there was a "work of the flesh." Satan gained his advantage then, and could lead from one false fleshly step to another. The Bethesda trouble sprung from this. Untold mischief has resulted. Yourself and the brethren with you are entangled and ensared in the results. This leads to the constant false witness against their brethren that many are bearing and nearly all repeating. In those you have expelled there is I am assured no thought of allowing evil doctrine, or of tolerating evil that the *Lord would have to be judged*, or of being careless or indifferent in regard to it. "Holiness becometh thine house O Lord for ever." This we surely and reverently own. At the same time we ought to deal with our brethren in the same grace in which our Lord deals with us day by day. "Forbearing one another and forgiving one another" prove that Scripture enjoins on us a measure of toleration of evil. Philahthes and others like him apparently forget this. Scripture to the Church *abounds* in similar direction. The Lord teaches us to imitate Himself. John xiii., 14, 15. Pleading for loving obedience in regard to these gracious precepts is not pleading that *wilful wickedness* should be allowed, or that Mormons or fornicators, or drunkards, or such like, should be received or retained. Those who seek to make it appear so as many do, yourself among the number, either wilfully or willingly misinterpret and misrepresent their brethren. Charity is very much lost sight of. It is sad work to be searching for and charging defilement on those the Lord cleanses—Eph. v., 26, John xiii, and to help the "accuser of the brethren" instead of the loving "advocate with the Father." 1 John ii., 2. Eph. vi., 18. To receive or retain in the Church "wicked" persons—or to "cast out" Godly Saints—is alike unholy and contrary to the Lord's will. The Lord keep us from the one iniquitous course and deliver yourself and those with you from the other. It is high time that brethren who have so long misused a passage in the 2nd, should take knowledge of the 3rd Epistle of John. It rebukes them "Malicious words" do not justify the wrong course,

but rather evidence the wrong spirit shewn in connection with it. Separation from *sectarian* association that hinders *obedience* to the Lord is one thing. Wholesale excommunication of those who meet in the Lord's name and seek only to do His will, as those with yourself did in years gone by—is another. You were the means of leading very many out of the former sectarian position, by setting forth the truth of God. And by the latter unscriptural course you have been the means of leading back a far larger number—though as yet they see it not—into a sectarianism *more narrow* than that they separated from. For undoubtedly yourself and your followers have now established a “confederacy” of Assemblies, to maintain a *unity* founded on an agreement in a course of rejecting Saints contrary to the Lord's will, and in insisting on terms of communion that Scripture knows nothing about, and that are wholly and only of *human* origin and obligation. The last manifestation of this in the requirement of Rotherham ere a beloved brother and sister could be received at Oldham is published with these letters. In your “*confederacy*” the *Ecclesiastical Independency*—you seek to charge upon us, is surely found. In it, by means of yourself, G. V. W. and those who rule, is found too the proud ecclesiastical assumption, that tramples down unsparingly the liberties and consciences and responsibilities of every Christian and of every Christian Assembly, that does not think and act as yourselves and that refuses to do *your* bidding. For there are both “*independency*” and assumption—when and where *man's ordering and authority* in the Church, take the place of Christ and His Word. Our doing the Lord's will is obedience and not independency. You know that you do not say the truth when you assert that because we have rejected a wrong judgment we are become an Independent Church. Between us and such a Church there is nothing in common as you are aware. Moreover your argument is sharp on both edges if it cuts at all. The Assembly that decides,—acts, and judges independently of other Assemblies. Why not call it an Independent Church as well as us? Further, because we refuse to join in an unscriptural act and judgment which other Assemblies have *carelessly consented to and carried out*, you say we have broken “the unity of the body.” “If one Assembly refuses the act of another,” “if it judges and acts independently of it, *where then is unity?* There is no practical unity of the body.” The answer is very simple. *It is where it was before.* Scripture says—“*There is one body.*” You tell us “The unity of the body is in itself *immutable*. It is divinely maintained and *for ever.*” It is plain you confound unity of judgment (1 Cor. i., 10.) with unity of the body. The proper thing to do when there is not unity of judgment—is to seek light and direction as to the Lord's will—and to act in obedience to the Word—Eph. iv., 2, 3. If there be sincerity in this—the difficulty will soon disappear.

But if one Assembly assumes authority to *compel subjection* in another, and to excommunicate if it is not rendered, the Lord's authority is trampled upon, and His supremacy displaced, and

there is a breach of the practical or manifested unity of the body. This want of "one judgment" is common. Therefore the need of "lowliness and forbearance and long suffering," (not excision), in "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." You thus make unity to depend upon one Assembly receiving the acts of another Assembly—without judging—be they right or wrong. But one part of your statement contradicts this and refutes it, as is the case in regard to almost all you contend for. Further on in your *Treasury* Article you say "but there is not a word about Churches (when we speak of unity), or bond of Churches, nor does unity consist of union of Churches." I admit this. But what then, becomes of your argument that one Assembly must receive the acts of another, or unity is broken. Let any Assembly obey the Lord and act according to His Word, and it will then have something to show for its judgment and course that will convict the consciences and rule the judgment of other Assemblies. The decisions of Saints in solemn matters of discipline should be such as will bear the light and carry the consciences of others as being according to the Lord's will,—John iii., 20, 21. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good,"—entails responsibility to *examine* and to *act*. So directed, we may not and we will not for the sake of apparent unity, join in carrying out unrighteous decrees, or in sanctioning that which we see to be contrary to the Lord's will. So far as I understand it, Scripture teaches that the "one body" is composed of many members, and that the relationship in it is *individual*. "We are members one of another." It does not teach a relationship of Church with Church, or gathering with gathering. A supposed relationship of the latter kind (through your teaching mainly) in your "confederacy of assemblies," is made to supersede and nullify the obligations resulting from the former *vital* relationship, which New Testament Scripture everywhere insists upon. The words "one another," set forth this *individual* relationship, and occur, I think, near seventy times. It seems to be lost sight of and its claims despised.* How can you and those with you be said to be acting on the truth that "the body is one" when you are disowning and "casting out" members of that body individually and collectively wherever you go, and teaching and leading others to do the same? And yet you say "Where it (the unity of the body) is not owned and acted upon I cannot go." The sentence will be much nearer the truth, I take it, if you leave out either of the negatives, You tell us, "practical manifest unity is maintained by discipline." Numbers will take *your word* for it, and for the sort of discipline that does it. But I think Scripture does not say so, and your word is not quite equal in authority. At any rate, cutting off "members of Christ" wholesale, and calling it "discipline," is a curious way of maintaining "practical manifest unity" of the body of Christ. If rejecting Saints not chargeable with evil doctrine or immoral walk, by

* See John xiii. 34; xv. 12, 17; Rom. xii. 10, 16; xiii. 8; xiv. 13; Hebrews, iii. 13; x. 24, 25, &c.

virtue of a *mere ecclesiastical edict*, whether of an Assembly or of individuals of assumed lordly pre-eminence, is keeping the unity of the body, we no longer in such a way seek to maintain it. If owning the members of Christ who are seeking to walk uprightly, as he bids us, Rom. xv. 7, and 1st Cor., i. 2, is "breaking the unity of the body," we can only say, if so, you contend for another body than the body of Christ—whose unity and rules, like those of the Freemason lodges you cite in illustration of its kind and character—we care nothing about. For yourself, as its Grand Master, we have still a sorrowing and affectionate regard, because of service and communion in days gone by. Scripture never bids us keep the unity of the body. You tell us "*it is immutable, divinely maintained, and for ever,*" and this accounts for it. The constant cry to keep the unity of the body can lead only, in the present divided and broken state of the Church, to a narrow sectarian limitation of its meaning. With yourselves the body means practically the "confederacy of assemblies" who reject their brethren, and are subject, though perhaps unconsciously, to the rule of yourself and the leaders who carry out your thoughts and do your bidding. "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit with all lowliness and meekness, and long-suffering, and forbearing one another in love," is the only way, as it seems to me, to manifest practically that there is "*one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all.*" It is sad that you should have been the means of setting aside the small but real testimony that brethren were bearing years ago to the blessedness of this. You are swift in judging, and saying that *all who in any way differ from you* as to the practical and solemn questions that are in debate are in the snare and net of the devil. You and those with you may do well to ponder our Lord's words, Matt. vii., 1—5. I am tempted to take up other points, but it is useless. I can only say, to me your arguments appear *specious, evasive and contradictory*. I fear your contention in these things is for your own position, your own views, your own authority, and your own followers. You may have your own reward. Your circular states that you acted in the flesh in 1846. That which you are contending for has grown in your hands and by your means during the twenty years that have intervened. In 1866 the question has still to be asked, "Is it founded on truth—will it stand?" It is plain Satan has wrought but too successfully, and very many have been ensnared and entangled, and are now sadly "corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" by his subtleties. The Lord deliver his Saints, and turn us each and all from the errors and follies of *our own ways*, and lead us for His name's sake in His pleasant paths of righteousness and peace. That the Lord may graciously and largely restore that fellowship of His Saints who are sincerely desirous to do His will, that you have been *mainly the means of breaking up and hindering*—and that He may give you grace to confess your sad mistakes in doctrine and in practice, is the sincere desire of

Your affectionate Brother in Christ,

S. W. SPURR.

APPENDIX.

The subjoined letters speak for themselves. It is scarcely needful to remark upon them. They furnish further clear evidence *that claims merely human and requirements that are only "commandments of men,"* are pressed and insisted upon in order to fellowship with those who follow Mr. Darby. The authority of Christ as Lord, and as "Son over his own house," is thus set aside. Faith in Him, and obedience to Him and to his Word, are not enough now. They used to be, and *ought* to be, and would be if brethren were not turned from the "simplicity that is in Christ." The practical effect of the course brethren now pursue is to exalt the Body or Assembly above the Head.

In J.N.D.'s circular issued in 1848—which has led to the rejection and defamation of thousands of godly Saints, *there was no reference to Scripture.* In the three short notices of the Saturday Meeting issued at intervals in 1863, by which the Saints of two London Meetings were "cut off," *there was no reference to Scripture.* In the letter from the Rotherham Meeting, signed C.S., issued also in 1863, by which *all* the Saints of the Sheffield Meeting were "cut off," *there was no reference to Scripture.* And in the letter (printed below) containing the curious requirements of Rotherham, *there is no reference to Scripture.* Surely this is significant. It shows that no Scripture warrant can be found for these proceedings and requirements. And those who search will find that Scripture condemns them. It is for the brethren at Oldham to decide whether they will enforce the requirements of the Rotherham letter. We believe they have not yet come to a decision. It may be a difficulty for them as it involves the consideration of other things of a "grave character." The Lord give them wisdom and grace to know and to do His will!

Oldham, May 6th, 1866.

To the Lord's people meeting at Rotherham.

Dear Brethren,

The Lord's people-meeting in Waterloo-street here have been for a long time deeply exercised in heart and anxiously interested about our brother and sister in the Lord, Mr. and Mrs. Porter, who came to reside here from Sheffield about two years ago, during which time they have been regularly attending the meetings, and have manifested in frequent conversations with several of us an anxious desire for fellowship; and after prayerful consideration we are of one mind that the right path is to write to you and see if anything can be done towards their restoration to fellowship, and to ascertain if you can let us know what is required from our brother and sister, Mr. and Mrs. Porter, in order to their being received into fellowship. On behalf of the Lord's people meeting in Waterloo-street, Oldham, who will be glad to hear from you at your earliest convenience.

We are, dear brethren,

Yours affectionately in Christ,

GEO. G. HUGHES.

JOSEPH WALSH.

Moorgate, Rotherham;

Lord's day, May 13, 1866.

To the Lord's children meeting at Oldham:

Beloved Brethren in the Lord,

Your appeal to us as to the case of our brother and sister, Mr. and Mrs. Porter, has been laid before us this morning, and we reply:—Firstly, commending you for the godly care you have shewn in not receiving our brother and sister before fully ascertaining from us upon what grounds such restoration *must* take place in order that saints in *every place* might approve of the step. Secondly, the course taken by the Sheffield meeting being of such a grave character,* and our brother, Mr. Porter, being one of the active agents,† we consider it necessary, before restoration can take place, that our brother, Mr. Porter, *judge, condemn,* and *repent* of his conduct for signing the circular that was issued from Sheffield, and that such judgment, condemnation, and repentance be written and given to yourselves for us, and also that a copy of the same be forwarded to those brethren in Sheffield whose names are appended to the above circular, and also that in such written judgment and condemnation our brother, Mr. Porter, desires the withdrawing of his name. This course being taken, our brother's and sister's return to our fellowship will be most cordial, having also the fullest confidence of the saints. On behalf of brethren assembling in Rotherham, expressing a strong desire that there may be no difficulty in the way of our dear brother and sister taking this step,

I remain, yours very affectionately in Christ,

H. BENNETT.

P.S.—My address you see at head.

* The "grave offence" of the Sheffield meeting was continuing to receive Mr. Goodall at the Lord's table after he had been wrongfully "put away." p. 11.

Was there nothing "grave" and wrong in the act of Rotherham? Hastily, —after meeting to "break bread,"—without enquiry, or consideration, or waiting upon the Lord for guidance,—to "cut off" all the saints at Sheffield with whom they had been so long in fellowship. They appear to count this a "light" matter. It seems from this letter and from the way they treat us, they count us saints no longer. Is all this according or contrary to Scripture?

† Mr. Porter's active agency was only his accompanying another brother to solicit (as we did repeatedly) the help and fellowship of brethren at Rotherham in *considering* the matters that troubled us, and about which they *ought* to have been exercised as much as ourselves. See pages 18 & 20.