

The Word of God, or Private Revelations: Which?

Are we to return to the old Romish doctrine: "Hear the Church?"

(REMARKS ON C. H. M.'s LETTER.)

A Letter to a friend, slightly altered.

"O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me." Ps. xliii. 3.

"Thy word is truth." (John xvii.) "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Ps. cxix.)

"Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Ps. xcvi. 11.

Lewisham, December 31, 1881.

My dear Brother,

I should have replied to your letter of the 18th ere now, had it not been for various occupations which have claimed my time. Now as to the contents of your letter, whilst thanking you for your brotherly confidence, I can but express at the same time my grief and surprise that such a paper as that of C. H. M., who is known to be an exhorter and evangelist, but feeble in church questions, should have been able to warp your sound spiritual judgment in so simple a matter as this. Deliberately I say—"simple;" for if ever there was a plain case, taking *Scripture*, and not our own feelings, or the feelings and exercises of some good men, for our guidance, surely this is one.

It is quite true that we ought to "take the question completely out of the region of human thought and human actings, and look at it simply in the light of the presence of God." But if we are there in the reality and sobriety of the Holy Spirit, the proof of our having been in the *presence of God*, will be that we shall keep the *word of God*. I cannot understand one going into the presence of God with some question, and *leaving his Bible behind*. It is all very

well to speak about "weighing" things "in the balances of the sanctuary," but we must not forget that the Holy Scriptures are "the balances of the sanctuary," whereby every thing has to be weighed, adjusted, and settled in the light of God's holy and gracious presence.

Another effect of being in the presence of God is the ability of discerning between good and evil, that is, between all that is of God, who is good, and that which is of the devil, who is evil. It is by being occupied with God, the Author and fountain of all that is good, that I learn to discern the evil. If I hear people having very little to say about God and His dear Son, but all the more about "judging the *evil*," and "separating from *evil*," without being able to tell me what the *evil really is*, which is to be judged, and to be separated from, I say to them: "Just put one letter before your favourite word, and you will get to the "*root of the matter*," to use C. H. M.'s words.

Now, where Satan is at work, as another has said, "*truth, I mean truthfulness, will ever be wanting. This I have always found, where the work of the enemy is.*" (Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, edited by W. Kelly, vol. xx p.17.)*

The light of God's presence, whilst producing within us self-judgment, and grace and forbearance as to the failures of our brethren, so far as they affect us *personally*, does not blind our eyes as to the characteristic tokens of the enemy" work in violence and oppression, deception and unrighteousness. God's holy, though gracious presence never makes us attenuate such evil deeds, calling them by mild names, such as "*blunderings*," "*mistakes*," or "*failures*."

The holy light of God's presence, with Whom we have to do, (let us not forget it!) and with Whom there is "no respect of persons," produces a very different effect, not only as to judging ourselves, but also "those that are within,"

* I would earnestly commend to you and all the saints a close study of that Volume in the light of Scripture,

instead of merely "*yielding*" to the judgment of another assembly, and "*taking an outside place to judge the evil.*"

I have not read the paper from which you quote the above. But whilst fully agreeing with the writer of the paper (if I have rightly understood your quotation from it), as to the duty of the Christian assembly and individual, to judge, not merely to "*yield*" to the judgment of a certain assembly, where general divine principles affecting the whole church of God are involved (that is, where it is not merely a question of local discipline), let me just apply this to Park Street's decision about Mr. Jull and Guildford Hall. Whether Park Street was justified in taking up and deciding that question as it did, I will not enter upon here. But I ask, Did not the Ramsgate question involve general principles of Divine truth, and of a far graver character than in Dr. Cronin's case? And were not these principles all-important, nay, of vital importance for the whole church? Yet, Park Street and its adherents (C. H. M. along with them) insist upon it, that the churches everywhere should "*yield*" to Park Street's decision, that is, (according to your quotation from the paper referred to above) take an outside (or, indifferent) place as to judging the so-called wickedness of Abbott's Hill.

You cannot fail to see, dear Brother, the utter inconsistency of the supporters of Park Street in their sayings, writings, and actings. And no wonder. For as soon as Christians leave the "*terra firma*" of Scripture, they get into the *swamps*.

I give you another instance of such inconsistencies. C. H. M. says in his paper: "Some may enquire, what business had Park Street to meddle with the matter? We reply, They did not meddle with it; it was forced upon them, and they were obliged to go into it. The same thing might have happened to any other meeting in London or

elsewhere; and we should have accepted their decision. It is a mistake to suppose that Park Street assumed anything like a Metropolitan influence or position in this case." Now the fact is that some time before Park Street took up the Ramsgate question, another gathering in London, at Hazelville Road, when that question "*was forced upon them,*" to use C. H. M.'s words, had taken up the matter, rejecting Abbott's Hill. Thus they came, as to Abbott's Hill, to the same decision *before* Park Street. Now, if Park Street did not "assume anything like a Metropolitan influence or position in this case," why then, I ask, was not the decision of the meeting at Hazelville Road as to Abbott's Hill deemed sufficient, and why did not Park Street and the other meetings in London and elsewhere "*yield*" to it, as Park Street now demands from the others? You see, all is inconsistency, from first to last.

I dare say, there are hardly any true-hearted saints of God, who have not, like C. H. M., gone, in the secret of the closet, through deep conflicts and exercises before the Lord. And much as one would respect such secret exercises of soul, especially those of an old and honoured servant of Christ, yet if they are put into print, they become liable to discussion, especially if they evidently are used as a means of influencing the saints of God in so grave a question. C. H. M. tells us that he has "groaned and wept and prayed and agonised about it in a manner he cannot describe." And after having given us a long account of these exercises, he says, that "they must go for what they are worth." But he evidently appears to think, that they ought to go a great way to influence the judgment of his friends and others. This is certainly not the way for God's dear saints to get their difficulties "*divinely solved.*" The right way for such a solution is—prayerful meditation on Scripture in God's holy presence, such as Ps. cxix. 41, 42,

104, 105, 114, 125, 128, 130, 131, 133, 135, 136, 151, 152, 173, and 2 Tim. iii. 14—17.

The only expression as to this question, approaching to Scripture, in C. H. M.'s letters is his saying, that it is here a question of the "unity of the body," and that that unity "must be maintained and confessed at all cost." But an expression that approaches Scripture *is not Scripture*, and often all the more dangerous the more closely it appears to approach Scriptural truth. We are told in Eph. iv. to "endeavour to keep the "unity of the Spirit," which is a very different thing. The notion of keeping the "unity of the body at all cost" is a great principle in the Church of Rome. Nobody thought of charging Dr. Cronin with violating the "unity of the body," but the "unity of the Spirit."

And I ask: Who have so sinned against the truth of the "unity of the Spirit," or against keeping the "unity of the body" (if you will take C. H. M.'s phraseology) as those whose judgment he advises you to submit to, that is, those at Park Street? And if he concludes by saying that we "must never abandon the Divine ground of gathering set forth in those precious words: There is one body and one Spirit," I can only say, I fully own the all-importance of that truth. But *is it* the "ground of our gathering"? It is true, we "are *built* upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets;" but building is not gathering. We are not gathered to a principle, but to a person. The church (as a habitation or building) is *built* upon a *ground*, but *gathered* unto a *person*. Therefore, to talk of a ground of gathering, (and making one verse of Scripture, "There is one body and one Spirit," that ground), is it scriptural? Is it not theological ground?—The sole centre of our gathering is the Blessed Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we are gathered unto His Name.

“Where two or three are gathered together unto My Name, there am I in the midst of them,” saith the Lord. *

A doctrine, however blessedly true, cannot be the “ground of our gathering.” This would at once lower us to a sect with a creed. The church as a divine building, has a living ground, even Himself Who is the Foundation-Stone, as He is the Corner, and the Topmost-Stone, blessed for ever be His great Name. I trust that you and I, dear Brother, are not going to have that which is called “the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” narrowed into a single verse, and His all-glorious and all-beauteous Person supplanted by a “creed,” or His blessed Name by human names, such as “Jull” or “Guildford Hall,” which certainly would be still worse than “Paul” and “Cephas” and “Apollas.”

May the good Lord deliver and guide you, beloved brother, and grant you to see that your present “repentance” is certainly a “repentance to be repented of,” and lead you to a better one, “not to be repented of.”

Faithfully and affectionately,

Your brother in Christ,

J. A. v. P.

P. S.—C. H. M. has a way of speaking in antitheses (i. e. by way of contrast), which appears to a superficial reader very plausible, but is very fallacious. For instance, he says “If God does not show you the evil, no man can; if He does, no man need.” Now, whilst fully owning the truth of 1 John ii. 25, 27, we must not forget, that God has given us His Word as a lamp for our feet and a light for our path, and for sound doctrine; and that the Lord has given us teachers, gifted by the Holy Spirit, to apply the light of His written word, in its eternal principles of truth to single cases

* The *reality* of the body of Christ, and its union with the Head, and of the members one with another, first established at Pentecost, is very different from the *intelligence* of its character, and being on that ground from the *knowledge* of it. If gathered to the Lord's Name, we are gathered on the ground of the Church, which is Christ's body.

practically. It is thus, and in prayerful communion with Him, that He shows us His will and way. He does not delight in "shewing us the evil," but He makes us "*eschew*" it, shewing us that which is good, in occupying us with Himself, Who is good, and with His Christ, who is His express image, and by feeding us, by His Spirit in the green pastures of His word, which reflects the beauties and glories of Christ; and being thus occupied, not with what is evil, but all that is really true, and pure, and good, i.e. divine, we shall see clearly, in the light of His presence and of His word, to discover and judge what is evil. It is a bad sign to pretend to especial divine revelations as the means of discovering and judging evil.

C. H. M. further says "If a man loses his temper in trying to prove that two and three make five, I am sorry he has lost his temper, but two and three make five all the same." C. H. M. is only begging the question (which he does through the whole of his paper), instead of proving it. But, to use for a moment his own illustration; if a man whilst trying to prove what he thinks to be true, not only loses his temper, but resorts to all kinds of unrighteousness, untruthfulness and deceit, he is not very likely to convince people of the truth he maintains. Such arithmetical illustrations are of little force, nay, misleading, if applied to divine truth, which needs not to be proved, but proves itself, and maintains its own authority, and those who desire in meekness, but faithfulness and sincerity to bear testimony to it, in the straight, though narrow path of righteousness and truth and peace, in the spirit of that "wisdom from above," which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

One who has got away from the mere human unto the divine side, does not call malice by the mild name of

“losing one’s temper,” nor untruthfulness “blundering”, nor lying and slander “errors and mistakes.” Neither does he charge those who cannot see their way to submit to Park Street’s actions of ecclesiastical assumption and independency with-violating the unity of the Spirit, whilst on the other hand he justifies those who are dividing the assemblies of God all over the country, by saying it is more important to maintain what he calls “the truth,” than to “keep people together.”

As to Park Street, C. H. M. further says, “all we have to do is thankfully to accept the judgment of our brethren gathered at Park Street.” “If that judgment,” he continues, “be wrong, God in His own time and way will make it manifest.” I heard the other day of some young labouring brother in the South of England, trying to sway the judgment of the assembly into submission to Park Street, by saying: “the safest way for them would be to follow Park Street; for if Park Street should prove to be right, so much the better for them; and if Park Street should prove to be wrong, they would not be blamed for having followed its judgment. I suppose that brother must have read C.H.M.’s paper. If this is not being on the high road to Rome, I do not know what is.

It is most painful, dear brother, to have to comment thus on the paper of an old and honoured servant of Christ; but Christ and His truth is more than even the most distinguished of His servants; and if that servant being misled himself, becomes an instrument of the enemy, to mislead the precious flock of God by means of his influence and position, it is time to warn the saints, lest they should be “beguiled with enticing words.”

“Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.”