

A LETTER

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BROTHER IN BRISBANE.

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

LONDON

G. MORRISH 20, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, E.C.

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Price Twopence.

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G. MORRISH 20, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, E.C.

A LETTER TO A BROTHER IN BRISBANE.



MY DEAR BROTHER,

I was deeply grieved to see a notice from the Brisbane Assembly the other day, casting in its lot with the meeting at Queen's Road, Reading, because intercommunion with Queen's Road puts the Brisbane meeting off divine ground, and associates it with unjudged moral, ecclesiastical and doctrinal evil, dishonouring to the name of the Lord.

It is sorrowful work to have to go over evil which one has judged and done with in one's own soul; but, as I was a witness at the meetings and heard all that passed, and as you may have believed some of the misrepresentations which are in circulation, I will state the facts and point out the principles violated by what took place at Reading, which make it evident that the Queen's Road meeting has left the ground of the one body and one Spirit on which God has gathered His saints.

You say that "the moral question was a purely local matter, and for any other assembly to take up and re-judge such a question is virtually to claim a higher title or competency to give judgment than that which Scripture gives equally to all churches, namely, the Lord in the midst and the Spirit of truth." But, strictly speaking, no other assembly has re-judged the matter.

I fully admit, as a divine principle, that one assembly is not competent to judge the discipline of another assembly as such, where Christ is in the midst; but you must remember that an assembly may get into such a state as to manifest by its own acts that it has left divine ground; and this is what happened at Reading. There was no discipline altered by other assemblies; but a judg-

ment, unrighteous on the face of it, and consciences not awake to recognise it as such, proved the mass leavened with unrighteousness.

The assembly was divided, the minority being unable to identify the Lord's name or themselves with a judgment which was in itself corrupt, contradictory and unrighteous. The few who separated waited a year, humbling themselves under God's hand, in the hope that the Lord might grant repentance to the mass who had identified His name with unrighteousness in *principle*. But the leaders asserted that they had the Lord's mind for what they had done, and adhered to it in spite of remonstrance. Those who separated, therefore, again spread the Table on the ground of the one body; and it was necessary for brethren elsewhere to judge which table should be recognised as the table of the Lord, as He could not be in the midst at both meetings, or He would have given the sanction of His presence to schism.

Now what was the moral question, put as shortly as possible? and what are the principles to which the Queen's Road meeting is committed by the contradictory judgment which, as men would say, whitewashed both parties by justifying the accuser and the accused?

A sister wrote a letter requesting that an interview might be held, at which, if possible, explanations might be given to remove from her mind suspicions that a brother (Mr. W.) had been untruthful, such suspicions being caused by what she had reason to believe were contradictory statements. Mr. S. then denied that he had replied to a question in the affirmative, as the sister supposed, and hence had not contradicted what Mr. W. had said. At the interview the sister accepted this denial as true, and supposed she must have misunderstood Mr. S. She expressed her regret to Mr. W. for having asked for the interview, and agreed that the matter should be buried. The parties shook hands, and parted, it was supposed, on terms of fellowship.

The matter was thus settled, and, I think, you will admit that nothing more should have been said about it. Mr. S., however, thought differently, and after the inter-

view withdrew from the sister, and would not even acknowledge her in the street. Three months later he wrote to inform her of his reason for doing so ; alleging that she had *endeavoured to fix a charge* of untruthfulness on a brother, had *sought to found it* on words which he had never uttered, and had dropped the charge when she could not substantiate it.

Now, as the sister had never brought a charge against Mr. W., it was false, on the face of it, to say that she had *endeavoured to fix it*, or *sought to found it on anything*. Her letter was written in a christian spirit, seeking for explanations to remove suspicions which were a barrier to christian fellowship, rather than harbour them in her mind. How Mr. S. could ever have conceived in his mind; that the desire of a christian sister to get suspicions removed was a malicious effort to fix a charge of evil, has always passed my comprehension. His letter was certainly no evidence of the charity that thinketh no evil.

Private efforts failed to induce Mr. S. either to withdraw his letter or alter his attitude towards the sister, and she left the matter to the Lord.

Some months later, the unhappy state of things in the meeting became known to others ; and a brother then pointed out to the saints that it was *due to the Lord and to the accused sister that Mr. S.'s serious charge should either be proved or withdrawn*. Another who laid the evidence as to the relations between Mr. S. and the sister before the meeting, pointed out that, if the sister was guilty of the conduct with which she was charged by Mr. S., such conduct came under 1 Cor. v.

The case was as simple as possible, and its very simplicity aggravated the course of those who proclaimed in the name of the Lord a contradictory judgment, which of itself proved that the Lord was not in their proceedings.

Instead of requiring a serious accusation which was true or false to be proved or withdrawn, the majority of the assembly answered questions, prepared beforehand by the leaders, in such a manner, that they justified the un-

righteous judgment of the sister's conduct, as expressed in Mr. S.'s letter, which made her guilty of malice; and at the same time they justified the sister, by saying she believed that Mr. W. had been untruthful, and that she was not guilty of malice. They have since declared that they searched for and could not find malice in the accused. Why, then, did they justify Mr. S.'s letter which did impute malice?

When the contradictory nature of the judgment was pointed out, instead of owning it they prevaricated, saying that they had not intended to justify Mr. S.'s words, but that they justified his judgment on the ground of his explanations, which were that he had not intended to impute malice or lying to the sister, but that he considered her imagination had run away with her. Mr. S.'s own explanations, consequently, made it absolutely necessary in righteousness to insist on the withdrawal of his letter, containing words imputing conduct which he said he did not mean to impute. But instead of this, the leaders actually made Mr. S.'s explanations which condemned his letter and his language, a ground for justifying it; and then called on the sister to withdraw a godly letter, which they had practically justified her in writing, by admitting that she sincerely believed that there had been untruth.

Moral principles of universal application are involved in these proceedings. If a Christian uses language about another, imputing conduct which he says he did not mean to impute, the proof of sincerity is not explanations, but the withdrawal of the accusation. Mr. S.'s explanations and his persistent refusal to withdraw his letter, falsely imputing evil conduct, only proved his insincerity. The majority of the meeting justified a judgment of conduct not contained in the letter before them, and allowed the false accusation actually made to stand. This is contrary to every principle of right and wrong. Even in the world, a jury recently gave heavy damages, because the non-withdrawal of a letter affecting a person's character, proved vindictiveness or malice on the part of the accuser.

Again, a Christian is responsible for his words as a matter of principle. (Matt. xii. 36, 37.) The assembly did not hold Mr. S. responsible for his language, and thereby violated another scriptural principle.

Then, instead of requiring confession from him for having falsely accused another, they accepted explanation of sin instead of confession of sin, and violated another scriptural principle. (1 John i. 9.)

Just think of admitting the principle, that the withdrawal of an accusation imputing wicked conduct is unnecessary if one, who has withdrawn from another at the Lord's Table on that account, explains that he meant something different to what the language plainly conveys, but neither withdraws the language nor expresses sorrow for his conduct.

In a recent pamphlet, a leader of the Queen's Road meeting states that a brother read a statement, accusing Mr. S. in respect of his conduct to the sister. This is untrue. Then he adds: "A brother, an elder, is charged before the assembly with a trespass against another, and without any notice whatever to himself or others, and as if Matthew xviii. 15 had never been written." This also is untrue. It was not alleged to be a case of trespass, and Mr. S. was not charged with having trespassed against another, as the author of the pamphlet very well knows, for the statement read to the meeting is in print, though it is left out of his pamphlet.

The statement was that Mr. S. had brought a most serious charge against a sister, and that it was due to the Lord's name and to the sister, that he should either prove it or withdraw it. No accusation was brought against Mr. S. The question raised was whether a sister, accused of wicked conduct, was guilty or not. It is notorious that her own brother positively declined to meet the assembly at Reading as the accuser of Mr. S. on the ground that Mr. S. was the accuser of his sister. Yet the author of the pamphlet says that he repeated the charge made against Mr. S. The statement, that the two brothers who informed the meeting of the facts were

the accusers of Mr. S., is as false as the statement in the letter to Bath, that Mr. S. was not the accuser of the sister.

When I first read a letter of October 31, 1884, by the author of the pamphlet, I saw that it contained such a shocking mis-statement of facts, that I wrote and denied the things stated so far as they regarded myself. His reply practically declined to receive what I said, and he now says, "to this letter I received no reply." As I had told him the truth once, it was useless repeating the truth a second time. In his recent review, his mis-statements are worse than before, and when statements are reiterated which are contrary to fact and have been denied, they are only evidence of a bad state and the power of the enemy.

Remember, it was no question of mistaken discipline, or of an error in judgment by the meeting at Queen's Road. Although an accusation of wicked conduct came before the assembly, sin was not dealt with in any shape or form. The two letters, of the accuser and accused, were before them in black and white, and it would be profanity to say that a judgment contradictory and unrighteous in itself, justifying accuser and accused, is the Lord's mind, or the result of the Lord in the midst and His authority in the assembly. The judgment was evidence of moral blindness, in a case so simple that it is impossible to find a just excuse for either the letter or the conduct of Mr. S. Nevertheless, the majority of the assembly:

1. Justified an unchristian letter, containing a baseless charge of malicious conduct against a sister, for which conduct the writer had placed her unrighteously under private discipline.

2. Justified the accused.

3. Required the withdrawal of a letter which sought, in a christian spirit, the removal of hindrances to fellowship.

4. Asserted that the matter ought never to have disturbed the peace of the assembly.

The matter before the assembly being whether an accusation of wicked conduct against one at the Table was true or false, the last clause makes the peace of the

assembly of more importance than the holiness of the Lord's table.

I have, I trust, said enough to shew you what the moral question at Reading was, and that moral principles of right and wrong, of universal application amongst saints, regulating christian conduct, were flagrantly violated by the unrighteous judgment, for which the Reading leaders persisted that they had the mind of the Lord.

But there was not only moral blindness. *Clericalism* proved the corrupt state of things; for it was under the influence of the leaders, who prepared the questions in private beforehand (Mr. S. being present), that the assembly acted thus and adhered to their judgment.

In addition to putting the sanction of Christ's name on the violation of moral principles, those who own the Queen's Road meeting must also sanction the following unscriptural principles, the result of what was done by the leaders at the meeting called to consider the conduct of a brother who had written to some elsewhere about Mr. S.'s doctrines:

1. That members of the body of Christ have no right to be present as witnesses at a meeting of brothers called from the Lord's table, unless they reside in the locality. (This is a direct interference with the Lord's rights, who might be pleased, not only to send them to be present as witnesses, but, if needed, to give counsel also. I am not advocating meddling, nor saying that brothers not local ought to interfere with local discipline; that was not the question at Reading. It was expressly stated at the meeting, which was broken up as pre-arranged by the leaders, that the brothers present were there as witnesses and not to interfere, and the Reading brethren were warned that they were giving up the principles of the church of God.)

2. That it is consistent with the principles of the assembly of God and with scripture to deny the right of a brother to ask servants of Christ to be present at a meeting as witnesses.

3. That a few brothers in an assembly may agree in

private to break up a meeting, called from the Lord's table, if members of Christ's body not resident in the locality are present; and may carry out their will, when assembled together, without a word of prayer or waiting upon God as to His will.

4. That one or two leading brothers have a right to take upon themselves to give permission, *as a matter of grace*, for one servant of Christ not local to be present at a local meeting of brothers.

This planning and usurpation of authority by individuals, which was carried out at the Queen's Road meeting, is the very opposite of dependence on and confidence in God and the action of His Spirit in the assembly. It is in principle *clericalism*, which ignores the presence and authority of Christ and the liberty of the Spirit.

Lastly, we come to what was the root of all the trouble, and first caused distance between the parties: namely, Mr. S.'s doctrines, or, what is now justly termed, the Reading heresy. The unrighteous judgment, and the human management or clericalism manifested in the meetings, were the ground on which those on the spot judged that the principles of God's house were given up, and forced them to separate from what had manifestly become Mr. S.'s party, and, in its principles, an unrighteous association, instead of God's assembly.

But in addition to this, intercommunion with Queen's Road is tantamount to giving the sanction of Christ's name to the principle, that "a man that is an heretic" is not to be admonished,* and that an assembly may refuse to state whether they endorse and uphold false doctrines alleged to be in their midst.

It would be folly to suppose that a company, so blind as to be unable to discern and judge unrighteousness in a simple question of right and wrong, would discern and judge a system of unsound doctrine; but that does not

* A "heretic" is one who makes a party, by setting up his own opinions. Hence the word "sects," or schools and parties after a man's opinion.

relieve them of the responsibility of judging it, and their not doing so is additional proof of their state.

Heresy is not necessarily the denial of foundation truth, but is, as G. V. W. said, "Departing from the spirit of truth; so that it is the spirit of the heretic we are called upon to judge as a work of the flesh, more than *the fruit in the form of doctrine.*" It was this which I felt from the first about Mr. S.'s tract on Christian Standing; and I commend to you G. V. W.'s little paper on Heresy, for a correct description of what has taken place at Reading.*

Mr. S.'s tracts are all cold, dry reasoning; a mixture of the letter which killeth and knowledge which puffeth up; and though plenty of scripture is quoted, it is easy to perceive that the theory of a standing before the throne is what has to be proved, though there is no such thought as to christian standing in Romans v. 2, or anywhere else in the New Testament. This is what usually marks heresy: a theory of the mind becomes the starting-point of departure from divine revelation, and scripture is made to fit in with the theory which thus underlies the system of doctrine propounded. This is more mischievous than open blasphemy, for souls are unaware of what is under the surface; they are deceived and led astray by human definitions, which please the mind, but neither reach the conscience nor satisfy the heart; and thus a party is formed, identified with the views of an individual, who becomes the means of displacing the authority of Christ and His word in the hearts of the saints.

In Acts xx. 30, Paul warned the elders of Ephesus as to what would happen after his departure: "Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." This has taken place amongst us. New-fangled notions of the human mind, confusion of terms and limitations of various kinds, woven into a system which denies fundamental doctrine in the Epistle to the Romans, and limits the effects of the cross, have been cast in amongst the gathered saints by Satan, to occupy them with words

* "The worst heresies grow out of truths misapplied." G. V. W.

and phrases and profitless discussions, and to lead them away from the spirit and power of the living word which is able to build them up. Both the Reading and the American doctrines are contrary to the truth of God which has been taught, received, and held amongst us for years past, and both verge towards one point, namely, the obliteration of the distinctive features of Christianity, and the unique position of the Christian. Both are stamped with the impress of the human mind; and, wherever this intrudes itself, the result is confusion, corruption of the word of God, party making, and untold damage to souls.

The way for the simple to escape the snare of the enemy is to heed the apostle's exhortation to Timothy: "Continue thou in the things which thou hast heard and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast learned the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The lesson to be learned, I doubt not, is to cleave more closely to the simple statements of scripture, and to be more than ever distrustful of human definitions.

I confess that I have no inclination to discuss with Mr. S. the exact meaning of "Standing" and "Condition," but, as you do not see evil in his teaching, and the question raised is what is the place which God in His grace has given to the Christian as the result of Christ's work on the cross, I cannot close my letter without making some remarks upon the theory which forms the keystone to the system of doctrine which he has propounded, although I have believed from the first, that his moral conduct in God's house should have entirely discredited his doctrines for every saint who has any sense of the behaviour which should characterise those who are to approve themselves in moral conduct and manner of life as the ministers of God, that the ministry be not blamed. (2 Cor. vi. 3-10.)

One result of the working of the finite mind is to place limits where scripture does not, and that is a marked feature of Mr. S.'s system. He first limits

the Christian's standing to clearance from sins before the throne, and then limits what is done for us by Christ's death and resurrection to giving us this limited standing defined by his own mind. He excludes from christian standing, the being alive and accepted in Christ risen, and "justified from *sin*;" distinctly denies that being justified applies to our evil nature; denies that Christ's standing determines the standing of the Christian, and asserts that the person justified from guilt comes to be *in Christ*, or in His condition, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and not as having a standing *in Christ* by virtue of what Christ has done for him.

On page 59 of "Is it the truth of the gospel?" he says: "If the Lord Jesus Christ's standing determines the Christian's standing, as I understand that statement, it would either surrender the cardinal truth of atonement or lower the Lord to a level with His saints." If one had not read it, one could hardly believe that this astounding statement had been written by one who has been for years a teacher amongst us. Doubtless, by the "standing" of Christ was meant, the ground on which he appears before God as the accepted righteous Man who glorified God on the cross. Mr. S.'s statement virtually makes out that God cannot reward Christ according to His righteousness and glory, and bring Him into the place of His counsels for man *on the ground of what He suffered on the cross*, because the Lord was always perfect in life, and might have returned to heaven at any time. But this is totally contrary to scripture. See John x. 17; xiii. 31, 32; xvii. 4, 5; Romans vi. 4.

The scripture quoted by Mr. S. in support of his theory does not separate, as Mr. S. does, the Person from the work of Christ, and does not state what Mr. S. asserts that it does. Romans v. 1, 2 is: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God *through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom* also we have access by faith into this grace, or favour [not place before the throne] wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Justification and standing are connected not only **with** being justified from sins by the blood of

Christ, as alleged by Mr. S., but also with being justified from sin in a new life consequent on the personal acceptance of a risen Saviour, who, having glorified God about sin on the cross, and died to it, lives to die no more.

The end of Romans iv. shews that the power of God has come in, and raised up, out of death, the Lord Jesus from under all the judicial consequences of His people's sins. As an ungodly sinner I meet God as a Justifier, and am justified from guilt through faith in Christ's blood; but as a Christian believing, not like Abraham that God will perform a promise but, on God who *has* raised Christ, I am reckoned righteous and am brought into God's favour by the One who was raised for our justification. I have thus been brought into a place on the other side of death where, through Christ risen, righteousness is manifested on the part of God. There is no such thought in scripture as having a standing in God's presence apart from *Christ and the favour in which He stands*; and we are brought into God's presence *through death*, and thus have a standing alive beyond death in Christ, who is our righteousness before God.

It is true that the question of sins is treated of in Romans before the question of sin or sinful nature; but when Mr. S. says: "Our being justified has reference to guilt consequent on the acts of a nature, and not to the nature itself," he *contradicts the word of God*, which, dealing with the question of nature in Romans v. 19, says: "By one man's obedience many shall be made righteous," or justified; and further states in Romans vi. 7: "He that is dead is justified from *sin*." If Christ had not died and borne the condemnation due to sin, no Christian could thus be said to be dead. If what Mr. S. says is true, either the judgment of God does not apply to an evil nature, or we are not cleared from the judgment of God and condemnation. But it is not true; and being justified from *sin* which is in my nature, is a direct result of the death of Christ and of what Christ has done for me.

Mr. S. says: "That it would be a denial of the truth of God's word and of fact, and certainly a misconception

of a very important section of the gospel in the Romans, to teach that we have got rid of the old man." What then becomes of the positive statement of Romans vi. 6, that "Our old man has been crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be annulled"? If the old man has not been "got rid of" judicially at the cross, why do we find in Ephesians iv.: "If ye have heard him and been instructed in him according as the truth is in Jesus; namely, your having put off . . . the old man," &c.? We have put it off on the ground of the way God dealt with it at the cross.

Mr. S. may mislead the unwary by introducing the words "of fact" into his sentence, and by saying that "nature is in us," and that Romans vi. treats of practice. There can however be no true christian walk, if the truth as to the condemnation and setting aside judicially of the old man in the cross be not known and accepted. "Our old man has been crucified with Christ" is not practice, but an accomplished fact which took place at the cross, when God executed judgment on sin in the flesh. The believer participates in God's righteousness by participating in Christ's death. Hence he is baptised, not to a living Messiah, but to Christ's death. The cross is the witness that, as a child of Adam, he has no status before God; and Christ's death is the only way of escape from the condemnation to which he is exposed as alive in the flesh.

Again Mr. S. says, treating scripture with the same boldness as before: "In the word these blessings [that is "headship of race" and "headship of the body"] are both effected by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the believer." But there is not a word in Romans v. to warrant the statement, that what he terms "headship of race" is effected by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

The subject treated of in the end of the chapter is not the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, but the acts of Adam and Christ resulting, on the one hand, in sin, condemnation, and death; and, on the other, in righteousness and justification of life. In verse 18 the effect of the offence of Adam is shewn to be "towards *all* to condemnation;" that was the bearing of the act itself; the

effect of the one act of righteousness, which is contrasted with Adam's offence, is, in its bearing, "towards *all* unto justification of life." In verse 19 the persons are more prominent than the acts, and the actual consequences of their conduct directly affect the many connected with each as head. By *one* man's disobedience *the many*, that is all connected with Adam as head, are constituted sinners; so by the obedience of *one*, *the many*, those connected with Christ as head, are constituted righteous.

Adam's disobedience did not end with the act, but introduced a continuing* state of sin in himself and his race, and thus gave his race a common standing in sin with himself. So Christ's obedience, though completed in one sense, did not end with the act, but introduced a continuing or subsisting state of righteousness in Himself and His race. Thus believers have a common standing in righteousness with Himself before God. The fact that it is a continuing *state* of sin and a continuing *state* of righteousness, the sinner alive in Adam being identified with sin and the believer alive in Christ with righteousness, does not exclude the idea of a *standing* resulting from the state in respect of what the person is in himself. I am a sinner by nature, and am under condemnation as the result of Adam's fall; but that does not relieve me of a standing and responsibility in a state of condemnation, alienation and exclusion from God; neither does the fact that I was born in sin, as a child of Adam, relieve me of a burden on my conscience in respect to the sin that is in my nature, which is hateful to God and makes me an enemy to Him.

In Romans the sinner is seen alive in sin, at enmity with God; not dead in sins, without a movement towards God, as in Ephesians. Mr. S. entirely ignores, in his system, that the sinner is alive in sin and under judg-

* I use the word *continuing state* in contrast to a completed act. The completed acts of Adam and of Christ each brought about what answered to the act and subsisted as a result, whether sin on the one hand or righteousness on the other, and this is distinct from our practical condition or state.

ment on that account. He treats him as guilty, needing a standing; or he views him as dead in sins, needing quickening. He speaks of one "ranged under the headship of Adam, and dead in offences and sins," learning that he is in Christ. But scripture does not link dead in sins in Ephesians with headship; and life in the flesh is in Romans the link with Adam. Mr. S. constantly mixes up different scriptures in such a manner as to produce confusion and destroy the force and meaning of each passage, so that the power of the word of God for the conscience is absent in his systematised doctrine.

As alive in sin, the judicial dealing with the evil nature must be settled, before the Christian can have his true place or standing before God. Connected with Adam, head of a fallen race, I am constituted a sinner, and have that standing before God as the result of the continuing state of sin in which all Adam's race is found through his fall, though I have added my own sins as well. Connected with Christ risen, who in resurrection became the Head of a new race, I am constituted righteous, and have that standing before God as the result of the continuing state of righteousness in which believers are found through Christ's death.

"In Adam all die." Alive in Adam, or life in Adam-nature or the flesh, links man with Adam as head of a sinful race, with sin as a slave, with the law as having dominion over a man as long as he liveth; but death, the death of Christ, severs the believer, having life in Him, from Adam and his race, breaks the link with sin as a master over a slave, destroys the title of Satan, who has the power of death through sin, and delivers from the first husband, the law. As the place and standing of the sinner alive in Adam-nature is Adam's place and standing in sin, so the place and standing of the believer alive in Christ is the risen Christ's place and standing in righteousness before God.

God dealt with sin, as well as sins, at the cross; with our nature, as well as the fruit of it. The blood settles the question of the believer's sins: they have been borne by Christ, are put away and forgiven, and the believer is

justified from guilt. Sin in the nature is not forgiven, but condemned. It is the principle of an independent will in man's nature; Christ was "made sin" for us. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [that is, by a sacrifice for it], condemned sin in the flesh," executed judgment on sin. Christ was forsaken as "made sin," was identified with it, and with that state in us represented by "sin in the flesh."

But in His death He died, not only *for* sin, but *to* sin, to have done with it for ever; and God, having been glorified by Christ's work in relation to sin, has to say to sin no more. Though not yet put out of the world, it is as much *judicially* put away before God as sins are, or it never will be. Christ came to glorify God and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and, as man, goes into the glory of God in righteousness as the result of His work. By faith in Christ risen out from among the dead I have life in Him; I died with Him in His death; and, having died, *am justified from sin.*

But Mr. S. excludes this from his limited standing, though it is judicial dealing with sin in man's nature, bringing to an end his standing as in Adam by Christ's death, and bringing him out of it, by redemption, into a new standing and place in resurrection, in life and righteousness in Christ, the One in whom he lives.

The power of the life, the experience of a soul, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost are different subjects. The believer having new life and a new place before God in Christ, as a new standing acquired for him by Christ's work, must not be confounded with or made to depend on either his experiences, the operation of the power of the Spirit in him, or the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

The two parts of Romans (chaps. iii.—viii.) form one complete and perfect whole: sins and sin both dealt with at the cross, and the believer, as a result, cleared from both, justified from sins and sin, alive beyond death in Christ risen, where there is no condemnation, and sealed by the Spirit as the result of Christ's work.

When we contrast acts and nature, or the fruit and

the root, we may apply the term state or condition to distinguish a continuing state of sin common to all, from sins for which each individual is responsible. But just as the sinner has a standing in what he personally is in his evil nature in sin, so the saint has a standing in what he personally is as alive in Christ, in a continuing state of life and righteousness in Him; as shewn in Romans v. 19. To leave out justification of life, and so limit the effect of the cross and christian standing, as Mr. S. does, to justification from guilt before the throne, would leave the Christian on the ground of a sinner in Adam life before God. The death of Christ is therefore needed to meet, as well as end judicially before God, a state of sin. Therefore my standing must either be in Adam or in Christ, although Mr. S. says it is in neither; which is as good as saying I have a standing without an existence or responsibility, and am neither a sinner in Adam nor a saint in Christ.

Blood expiates; death ends a state. And, after closing judicially by dying the Adam state and standing in sin for the believer, and the history of sin as a continuing state before God, Christ entered Himself into a place, standing or position as man, in which man had never been before, and the believer is identified with Him there. It is the place of God's purpose for man; and Christ's work is the ground on which, and the Holy Ghost is the power by which, the believer is brought into it.

The effect of Mr. S.'s teaching is to deny both the place of the believer and the ground on which he stands in it, by limiting and lowering both the standing and the work which gives it to him, and teaching what is not true about condition and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Christ's death closes judicially a standing consequent on a continuing state of sin common to all; Christ's death or obedience opens out a new standing in resurrection life, consequent on a continuing state of accomplished righteousness common to all who believe.

Mr. S., by excluding from christian standing the being alive in Christ and justified from sin, which is one result of Christ's death and resurrection, virtually

makes the Holy Ghost seal a sinner alive in Adam-nature, in sin and under condemnation, and over whom Satan has title and power through sin. But according to scripture the Holy Ghost is the witness in the believer, alive in Christ out of death, that sin in the flesh has been condemned, the old nature judged at the cross, and ended judicially in the sight of God, and the title of Satan over the believer destroyed.

In Romans v. a person is connected with fallen Adam or with Christ risen, as we have seen. That is his "standing." Nothing can sever his connection judicially in the sight of God from Adam and his race, and settle the question of his responsibility as a child of Adam but death, the death of Christ, which removed from before God the sin which marks the Adam state. Death, the death of Christ, closed the question of responsibility as a child of Adam for the believer, and faith in Christ connects the believer with Him in life the other side of death, Christ's death having severed him for ever before God from the Adam race and the standing and condemnation consequent on the fall.*

But, if my responsibility as a sinner is met before God and for faith in Christ's death, my new standing and responsibility must be settled before I can talk of my condition ; otherwise I should neither understand the nature of christian responsibility, nor have moral power to fulfil it. But the Christian has in fact a new life in Him with whom he is now connected in His resurrection out of death, and has been buried with Him by baptism unto death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, he also should walk in newness of life. The Holy Ghost is the power of the new life, and characterises the Christian's life and state *subjectively*; but I am connected with Christ out of death by faith, and am alive in Christ in a new standing which is *objec-*

* Mr. S. boldly says, that, whilst here in the body, our connection with Adam as the head of the race cannot be severed. This positively makes my death, instead of Christ's death, sever me from Adam ; and thus leaves me whilst in the body exposed to condemnation.

tive. If there is no judicial termination of the Adam standing, as alive in sinful nature, by sin being condemned on the cross, and judicially put away by Christ's death, and no severance from Adam as the head of the race, there is not only the flesh in us, as to fact, because we are in the body, but the individual is identified with sin as a continuing state and the Adam standing before God, and there is a perpetuating of the old Adam sinful nature and of the sinner alive in sin, and a making the indwelling of the Holy Ghost produce Christ's condition in a *justified person who has no standing as accepted in Christ risen and is not judicially dead.* And this, mark it well, is the deadly doctrine beneath the confusion of terms and misapplied texts in Mr. S.'s teaching. A person is said to be sealed by the Holy Ghost who is not justified in reference to sin in his nature by the work of the cross, and consequently cannot have a standing cleared from condemnation.

Mr. S. says, that making "in Christ" to be a part of the believer's standing, would be to add something to the value of the atoning sacrifice. This is not true. God, in virtue of the value of the atoning sacrifice, gives the believer a standing or place in Christ. Then the Holy Ghost is given to the believer as a witness to the perfection of the work which has perfected him for ever, and given him a place in Christ; and it is by the Holy Ghost I am made conscious that I have this new place and standing in Christ before God in cloudless favour in grace, but in accordance with righteousness, on the ground of what Christ has done. Mr. S., by putting the truth of sealing out of its place, and separating it from what Christ has done for us, makes the Holy Ghost confer or produce a condition without any righteous ground for doing so, and also put a piece of new cloth on an old garment.

My personality, "I," must not be confounded either with Adam, with Christ, or with the Holy Ghost, though the believer as to the new nature is identified with Christ: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Christ, as man, gets a place *as the result of His work;*

the believer gets Christ's place *on the same ground, Christ's work*; the Holy Ghost is given *on the ground of Christ's work*, to the believer in Christ and His work (Eph. i. 13), as a witness to what its value is in the sight of God, and consequently to what the Christian's place is in Christ before God as the result of that work.

The believer then is justified from sins and sin, brought to God in Christ through death, in virtue of the work of redemption, and sealed by the Holy Ghost. The first verse of Romans viii. is the result of what has been stated in chapter v., and views the Christian as *in Christ*, identified in life with Him in His position beyond death and judgment. In the experience of a soul "in Christ" is the point reached by one who, as described in the end of Romans vii., has learnt deliverance: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." But it is most important not to confound the place of acceptance in life and righteousness in Christ before God, as the result of faith in Christ and of what Christ's death has acquired for me, with the consciousness of being identified wholly with Christ in that place by the power of the Holy Ghost dwelling in me. So we get "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" as the result of Christ's work referred to in chapter v. 19. That is objectively my place and standing in Christ.*

Practical liberty in the power of the new life follows in verse 2: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." Then, in verse 3, &c., the flesh condemned, judged and ended for

* J. N. D. says: "He does not here speak of the efficacy of the blood in putting away sins (all essential as that blood is, and the basis of all the rest), but of the new position entirely beyond the reach of everything to which the judgment of God applied. Christ had indeed been under the effect of the condemnation in our stead, but when risen, He appears before God. Could there be a question there of sin, or of wrath, or of condemnation, or of imputation? Impossible! It was all settled before He ascended thither. He was there because it was settled. And that is the position of the Christian in Christ."

Again he says: "Sin in the flesh was totally condemned by the just judgment of God, and the condemnation itself is the abolition of that sin by the act of sacrifice."

the Christian as a state before God, and the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus characteristic of the new state, so that the Christian is not in the flesh but in the Spirit, although the flesh is still in him. Subsequently we have the Spirit of God indwelling, as a divine Person, distinct from the believer's spirit.

But Mr. S.'s unscriptural statements are not confined to the subject of christian standing. What he says about "condition" is also contrary to scripture. No one would deny that he that saith he abideth in Him ought also so to walk even as Christ walked, but Mr. S. says, on page 19 of "Christian Standing and Condition:" "The condition of the Head of the race, as regards sin and the world, is the absolute condition of every one of that race, and should be made good practically in every one of them." "By state or condition is meant," Mr. S. says, "what the person is, or the circumstances in which he is." Now Christ's condition as regards sin and the world was always sinless; but, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

In fact, the believer is in wilderness circumstances and Christ is in heaven; and though we are not seen by God to be in the flesh, the flesh is in us, so that we are neither what Christ is now as to condition, nor in the circumstances in which He is, and Mr. S.'s statement that "His condition is our absolute condition" is false. "As he is so are we in this world" refers to righteousness and standing, not to condition, as alleged by Mr. S.

The Christian's position in Christ is absolute and unchanging; but, instead of having to make good an "absolute condition," he has by faith to reckon himself to have died to sin and to be alive unto God; that is, to reckon a fact which is true of him before God in Christ as to his standing, as dead and alive, to be true as to himself down here, and as free from sin to yield himself unto God, and his members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Through the Spirit the Christian mortifies the deeds of the body. In the power of the Spirit he applies the cross to that in him which was judged at the cross; always bearing about in his body

the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifest in his body. This would not be necessary if Christ's condition is his absolute condition.

Christ's *position* in relation to sin was altered by His dying to it, but *not His condition* in relation to it, which was always the same. Therefore Mr. S.'s doctrine as to our "condition" weakens the effect of Christ's *present position*; living beyond death instead of living in this world: "In that he liveth he liveth unto God." The teaching of scripture is, that I am in Christ for acceptance and standing; He is in me for condition and walk. And by taking away or denying the Christian's standing alive in Christ risen, beyond sin, death, judgment and the power of Satan, Mr. S. blots out what is necessary for christian walk; for it is the sense in the soul of what the standing is which produces the conduct before God suited to it.

Mr. S.'s last new doctrine is worse than all. In "Recent Utterances," he asserts that "Propitiation by blood was made by the Lord in heaven and after death." And in reply to a brother who affirms that "the whole work on which our souls rest with divine certainty was accomplished in this world, not in heaven;" Mr. S. says: "If so, propitiation by blood the Lord has not made, nor can He make." Comment is unnecessary.

I had written thus far and was about to close, when I received your letter of the 21st June, and therefore add a few more remarks. I am thankful to find that some of the assembly have been preserved from joining Mr. S.'s party, and only regret that you are not with those who still remain on the ground of the one body, and true to the Lord in refusing to identify His name with wickedness.

You say that those who are identified with Reading "judged that there was no scriptural ground for any gathering to re-judge or reverse the judgment pronounced by another assembly on a purely local matter, such assembly at the time of the investigation being recognised as an assembly of God, and as such invested with scriptural authority in an equal way with all assemblies of

the one body for judging of such matters, with the additional advantage of knowing the circumstances."

I have already said that *in matters of discipline where scriptural principles are not violated* and sin is not sanctioned, one assembly must own the acts of another. But an assembly is only to be considered as such so long as the profession it makes of owning Christ in the midst is borne out in practice, and it acts consistently with the word under His authority by the Holy Ghost. Therefore, when the act of a meeting plainly *denies the principles of scripture*, the question is raised at once, whether such a meeting should be recognised any longer as an assembly of God on divine ground.

Suppose a meeting decides to receive from those on what is termed open ground, the act would prove the giving up of scriptural principles, and the meeting and its decision would be disowned, even if the decision were unanimous. Unanimity is merely the fact, that those present are of one mind, and there may of course be unanimity in evil as well as unanimity in good. The principle on which you, and those with you, have acted is the principle of popery: namely, that the church is infallible, and that the voice of the church settles everything.

Because Reading was "in fellowship" and settled a certain matter, (though the settlement was *unrighteous in principle* and caused a division in the assembly) you say there was no scriptural ground for another assembly to keep apart from it (that is, from its unrighteousness), or to judge that Reading was no longer an assembly of God! All must own Reading because Reading was once in fellowship; or rather, all must own the majority of the meeting to be the assembly and to be invested with authority, because they asserted they were the assembly and kept on breaking bread, although they despised the consciences of the few and of brethren elsewhere, and persisted that their contradictory and unrighteous edict was the mind of the Lord! "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" Such a principle as

this leaves out of consideration that what is done by a meeting or a majority may prove that they have lost all sense of what is due to the Lord; and, in such a case, faithfulness to Him would lead an obedient soul to depart from iniquity. Your principle ignores the question whether flesh or spirit, good or evil, right or wrong, Christ or Satan, rule in the assembly, and establishes the meetings of brethren, whatever their state, on the popish principle of succession; whereas the Lord in the midst, and the true recognition of Himself there and of His supreme authority, alone gives a meeting its status as an assembly.

The Reading heresy was and is a work of Satan to corrupt the truth of God. The moral and ecclesiastical evil proved the state of the mass, and that Mr. S.'s character was of more importance to the meeting than Christ's glory, so that they would neither judge his conduct nor regard him as an accuser. You say: "Such assembly being recognised as an assembly of God, and as such, invested with scriptural authority in an equal way with all assemblies of the one body for judging of such matters." But the recognition of an assembly does not invest it with authority, nor make it an assembly of God. Christ in the midst, as I have said, makes a meeting an assembly of God, and the authority of the assembly flows from Christ. The assembly acts in His name and with His authority, but He is the source of the authority, and action contrary to scripture must be abuse of authority and a denial of His name and word.

I hold tenaciously the truth of the Lord in the midst, acting by His Spirit where two or three are gathered, and that their acts, done in His name, are valid for the whole church. But He Himself may give evidence of the corrupt state of a meeting, to shew that the principles of scripture and of the assembly of God have been given up; and then, those disowning the meeting and its acts recognise the fact, and cease to receive from or commend to such meeting, because they cannot identify Christ's name with the evil there manifested and unjudged.

He separated a few in the Reading meeting from the mass, which had become an unrighteous association, characterised by unrighteous principles. The Bath meeting did not reverse the Reading judgment. They had to judge whether they could allow a brother from Reading, known to them as godly, to break bread at the Lord's table in Bath, as he no longer owned those meeting in Queen's Road as the assembly of God in Reading. They therefore wrote to Reading, and received a reply from one of the leaders on behalf of the brethren, to the effect that "no charge of sin against a sister by a brother" among them had been before the assembly.

Now if this was not a deliberate falsehood it was equivocation and deceit. The notice read to the assembly was: "A most serious charge has been brought by Mr. S. against a sister in fellowship, namely, that she endeavoured to fix a charge of untruthfulness on a brother in the assembly;" and it was pressed that a meeting should be called, as it was "due to the Lord's name that the charge should either be proved or withdrawn." A perfectly righteous principle was presented as a ground for action, whatever else might have been done. What a leader said or did in the assembly is not the point. What the Lord presented to the consciences of the saints in Reading is the point. Evidence was given by her brother of the nature of the accusation brought by Mr. S. against his sister. In the statement he read to the assembly, he said: "Mr. S. spoke last evening of the evil of my sister's course and when he woke up to it he was shocked. This is an accusation of a very grave nature." Is the evil of a person's course no charge of sin? Again, he said: "The real question before the assembly is whether what is written in Mr. S.'s letter of September 15, is true, and what is the nature of the accusation therein contained, and what the claims of the Lord are in view of it." He then shewed at length the nature of the sin with which Mr. S. had charged his sister. Yet in the face of such statements and evidence, the brethren at Reading can say: "No charge of sin against a sister by a brother

had been before the assembly." Further, the writer of the pamphlet already alluded to states that the brethren at Bath adopted the ground which those at Queen's Road had all along repudiated, of regarding the sister as the accused person, and that brethren at Queen's Road replied still repudiating that position. If the sister was not the accused, what was the inquiry about? and what was the evil of her course which Mr. S. referred to? It is shocking to think of such determination to shut the eyes to plain facts, rather than look anything in the face which might render faithful dealing with Mr. S. a necessity.

It is an absolute impossibility to trace either truth or holiness in the proceedings, much less to suppose for an instant that they have the sanction of the Holy and the True, whose approval is the one thing to be sought by His people in the midst of the ruin and confusion of the last days.

You ask whether there are not some in fellowship with London who are teaching doctrines quite as subversive of Christianity as those of which Mr. S. is accused? So far as I know, certainly not; but if there were, that would be no excuse for going on with Mr. S. The brother to whom you refer, in contending for the truth, may have been inaccurate in some statements he put forth. We are none of us free from liability to erroneous thoughts as to the meaning of scripture. But a servant of Christ does not become a false teacher or a heretic from mistaken expressions or views. It is very different at Reading, where *a system of doctrine opposed to scripture* has been circulated in pamphlets far and wide, and the teacher, after having been manifested as a false accuser and persecutor of those who objected to his doctrines, has become the centre of a party which has given up the ground of God's assembly, and identified Christ's holy name with unrighteousness.

I am, yours affectionately in Christ,

JOHN S. OLIPHANT.

