

THE PLYMOUTH BRETHREN.

A LETTER

TO

REV. OSMOND DOBREE, B.A.,
GUERNSEY,

CONTAINING

STRICTURES

ON

MR. WILLIAM KELLY'S PAMPHLET, ENTITLED
"GOD'S PRINCIPLE OF UNITY."

BY

REV. FREDERICK WHITFIELD, B.A.

INCUMBENT OF KIRKBY RAVENSWORTH, NEAR RICHMOND, YORKSHIRE.

"He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour
cometh and searcheth him."—Prov. xviii. 17.

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By the Rev. OSMOND DOBREE, Curate of St. John's, Guernsey.

LONDON: WERTHEIM & MACINTOSH.

THE PLYMOUTH BRETHREN.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—I have read with much care Mr. Kelly's reply to your tract, entitled "Separation from Evil, not God's Principle of Unity." Startling as the title appears, your meaning, to every unprejudiced mind, is simple and clear. It is plainly, that "because of certain errors in the Established Church, God's people ought not to separate from it;" and in this broad principle, without committing myself to the details, I fully concur.

My object in writing you this letter, is not to defend the position you have taken up (for that you are well able to do yourself), but to reply to Mr. Kelly's pamphlet. I do it for the truth's sake. I do it for God's glory solely. I do it in order to preserve from misconception and error many of the Lord's people who, not knowing "the Plymouth Brethren" so well as I do, may be drawn into agreement with what he has put forward.

Circumstances threw me into connexion with these people for many years. I resided with several of them, was very often at their meetings, and, of course, during the week met most of them. In this way my lot was cast among them during a long space of nearly twelve years. I am therefore in a position to speak about them. Few people, even of the

“Plymouth Brethren” themselves, saw more of them, or knew them better, than I did, although during this time I never, I thank God, threw off altogether the bond which united me to the good old church of my forefathers—the Scriptural Church of England.

Not to waste time on words, allow me to enter on the examination of the tract I have alluded to. As it is divided into two parts, the reply to your own remarks on our Church, and to your remarks on the “Brethren,” I shall also make a similar division in this letter.

Mr. Kelly’s first attack is against the rubrick for the Communion service, which orders that “every parishioner shall communicate.” Now, here is the question; when the rubrick says “every parishioner” is to communicate, are we to take Mr. Kelly’s interpretation of these words, or our church’s? For whom are the services of our church intended? I reply unhesitatingly, what I trust I shall elsewhere be able to prove, for professing Christians. This being so, what is the evident application of the words “every parishioner?” What but every “professing Christian parishioner?” Our church commissions the curate to reject those whom, *alone*, the Bible instructs him to reject, viz., openly wicked persons.

The reasons which limit the discretion of the minister in excluding persons from the Holy Communion are very obvious. The apostles’ uniform practice was, to receive men upon their profession, to deal with them as being what they professed to be, until their conduct gave unmistakable proof of their hypocrisy. When this Holy Sacrament was profaned by the Corinthian church, the apostle did not constitute the sound portion of that body a judge of the spiritual character and standing of those who so grossly sinned in regard to it. And were our ministers invested with an irresponsible power of excluding persons from the Communion, on the ground of pronouncing upon their

state before God as converted or unconverted, would not an ecclesiastical despotism inevitably result? Now, in this, as in other things, the godly wisdom of our church appears. That which is brought forward as a defect, turns out to be an excellence, if Scripture is to be our guide, for she requires her ministers to repel those only whose scandalous lives and open wrong-doing, plainly evidence their unfitness to come to the Communion. And then she addresses, in the most affecting terms, the consciences of those who "mind" or purpose "to come," in order that they may examine themselves, and so eat and drink the memorials of the Saviour's love. Mr. Kelly's plan would be, that he or others should judge their fellow-worshippers in order to provide against unfit communicants. The church's design is to call on men to "examine themselves," as the most effectual and scriptural means of securing purity of communion. As to the issue thus raised, we are quite satisfied to be guided by him who said, "let a man examine himself (and not his neighbour), and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup."—1 Cor. xi. 28.

I find, as in the case of Mr. Kelly, so also in the case of all Dissenters, their attacks on our church and ritual proceed from ignorance or misrepresentation of them, and their evident design. It is so in all cases. Examine any of the articles written against them,—enter into conversation with Dissenters on the subject, and this is the evil at the root. There is a crooked, one-sided, mis-shapen view of everything. While in their judgment of ordinary matters they can display breadth of thought, and much charity, when they come to speak of our church there is the same old story, the same one-sided, prejudiced view as ever, and beyond it they cannot look a step. When will professing Christians among our Dissenting brethren display the same wisdom and forbearance in judging of our church as they do of the common concerns of life? It really

exhausts the patience of many to hear re-iterated, the long-exploded and repeatedly-answered charges against us with which our ears are so continually assailed.

But to proceed with the tract. Mr. Kelly next says (p. 4), "Scripture, as you admit, contemplates the *saints*; but the law of the land contemplates the *parishioners*." I have sufficiently shown, I trust, the meaning our church attaches to these words. But here again let me remark, Mr. Kelly manifests the same one-sided judgment on the Bible as he does on our church. What are "saints?" Are they real believers, or professors as well? Mr. Kelly attaches an arbitrary view to the term. I maintain that they are professing Christians, comprising both true and false. If we look at the term as used in St. Paul's address to the church of Corinth, we cannot possibly come to any other conclusion. St. Paul calls the members of that church saints; yet what was the character of some of its members? Some of them were "not reconciled to God;" others "knew not God;" others denied the doctrine of the resurrection; others came to the Lord's table drunk and gluttonous; others were living in the practice of many grievous sins. Does not this show, manifestly, that the term is applied in God's Word to both classes? Does it not show that our church uses the term "parishioner" in the same sense as Paul used the term "saint?" If Mr. Kelly had, with an unbiassed mind, taken his Hebrew Bible and Lexicon in his hand, he would have found that there is scarcely one of these terms that is not used in an *ecclesiastical* as well as a *spiritual* sense.

Mr. Kelly next attacks those noble bulwarks of our Christian faith and liberty in this land, the Articles of the Church of England. The first he attacks is the second. I agree with Mr. Kelly, that it is the sinner that is called upon to be reconciled

to God in Holy Scripture. But let me ask, what would have been the use of knowing that God was reconciled to us, if there were no *medium* through which that reconciliation could come? The sacrifice of Christ is the great channel through which, and through which alone, God's love could ever have flowed down to fallen man. Without that medium, of what use would it have been? Though that love existed in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, as our seventeenth Article plainly states, and which is the true explanation of the second, there was no avenue by which the sinner could become its object but the sacrifice of Christ. It was the meeting-place between God and the sinner. It was to God exactly what it was, in this respect, to the sinner. And it is this view of it that our Article clearly contemplates. It is in this sense every unprejudiced mind—every mind who exercises the same unbiassed judgment about it as he does about the ordinary concerns of life—understands our second Article, and the expression “to reconcile His Father to us.” How *can* Mr. Kelly make a statement so contrary to fact as that he makes (page 8), when he says, “this Article is not only defective, but false!”

In seeking ground to object to the second Article, Mr. Kelly reproduces the old misrepresentation made by the Socinians of the doctrine of the atonement (Magee *on Atonement*, Note xx.), and continually insisted on by Mr. F. D. Maurice, more especially in his *Theological Essays* (Essay vii. *On the Atonement*), namely, that the sufferings and death of Jesus are the procuring cause of the Father's love, &c. This is the interpretation Mr. Kelly attaches to the language of the second Article, and which he pronounces “confused and erroneous in the extreme.” But what, I ask, are the words embodying this most offensive caricature of the doctrine of the church? I am obliged to give them, as Mr. Kelly has not done so, probably from

some distrust in the foundation on which he grounds his objection. "Christ truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile His Father to us, and to be a sacrifice not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men." Now, I ask, what is the plain sense of this statement? Is it not that the eternal Father's justice called for wrath upon the sinner, and was so unswerving in its demands, that the sacrifice of Jesus was the precious propitiatory offering required "to declare His righteousness" in the forgiveness of sin? Was not Deity offended? Were not the means by which His anger was turned away the gracious interposition of the Lord Jesus Christ? Mr. Kelly admits "God needed an atoning sacrifice." If atonement was necessary, I ask, what is the doctrine in the Article which calls for the sweeping allegation "erroneous in the extreme?" Is it the *word* to reconcile, whose meaning is swelled to the enormous dimensions of asserting that "the Son's death was the procuring cause of the Father's love?" equally might exception be taken to the meaning of the word atonement,—at-one-ment, the bringing together of those who before were apart. Yet Mr. Kelly freely, however inconsistently, admits this word expresses the Scripture doctrine. But what entirely justifies the language of the Article is the employment of this very term in Rom. v. 11, where for the word "atonement" in the text the margin reads "reconciliation." Now, I freely admit the latter is the more correct rendering; still the fact, that our translators substituted the word "atonement," shows in what sense they understood the former word, and that in their estimation it did not wrap up the latent meaning the critical eye of Mr. Kelly has discovered therein, namely, that the work of Christ was the procuring cause of the Father's love. But what saith the Scripture, Heb. ii. 17? If Christ by His death made reconciliation for the sins of the people, to

whom, I ask, was it rendered? And if, as all must admit, it was to the Father, where is the confusion and extreme error in the statement of the second Article?

I freely admit, that in the second Article there is no disclaimer of the false and abominable doctrine which Mr. Kelly's ingenuity has found there, namely, that the procuring cause of the Father's love was the death of the Lord Jesus, and that simply because the Article has to do with the Person and work of the Son alone. But did he show equal ingenuousness as ingenuity, he would, in the seventeenth Article, have found what entirely negatives his insinuation, an Article which sets forth the Father's love, in "determining from eternity to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He had chosen out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation as vessels made to honour." Not to multiply such expressions as "Almighty Father, who hast given Thine only Son to die for our sins. and to rise again for our justification;" (Collect for first Sunday after Easter) or, "Almighty God, who hast given us Thy only begotten Son, to take our nature upon Him," &c.; (Collect for Christmas-day) or when, at the most solemn part of the Communion service, she embodies the words of Scripture, "So God loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," &c. We may aptly say with Archbishop Magee (Discourse No. 1), "the sacrifice of Christ was never deemed, by any who did not wish to calumniate the doctrine of atonement, to have made God placable, but merely viewed as the means appointed by Divine wisdom through which to bestow forgiveness; and, agreeably to this, do we not find this sacrifice everywhere spoken of as ordained by God Himself?"

The next Article he attacks is the twenty-third, which he says is "clean contrary to truth on the momentous subject of the ministry" (page 8). It is

impossible not to be struck with Mr. Kelly's biassed judgment and want of candour, in examining this Article. He says, "the lawful call is there restricted to this work by *men* (the italics are his) who have public authority given unto them (by whom given?) to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard." Then he says, "Scripture is express that it is the *Lord*, and not man, who calls." What does Mr. Kelly mean by such a passage as this? Does not God rule the hearts and minds of the godly men in our church to ordain labourers in the vineyard? And is it *man* that sends them in our church, and not *God*? Long before the time of ordination comes round, are not prayers offered in every church of our land, which are heartily prayed by thousands of godly ones in our church, that He would "dispose His servants faithfully and wisely to make choice of fit persons to serve in the sacred ministry of the church, that He would give them His grace, replenish them with His truth, that they may serve His church to the glory of His Name?" Is it *man* that sends them, or the Holy Spirit of God, in answer to the prayers of His people, disposing His ministering servants in our church to call and send them? And let me ask Mr. Kelly, does his own church, or those with whom he meets, not do the same? When they send (as they have done, myself being a witness) their missionaries to labour in the Lord's vineyard, do they not meet and ask God to make choice of His servants for the work, and THEN do not the "*men*" among them send them off? If ours are "man-made ministers," are Mr. Kelly's anything else? Are not like petitions put up by both of us? Are not the ministers of each church sent out by the members of it? What then is the difference? Only in the *mode* or *manner* of sending them. Oh! sad it is to see such a lack of grace and love, in one calling himself a Christian towards the members

of another church as that displayed by Mr. Kelly here!

The next Articles he attacks are the thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh. These he calls mere figments, "the offspring of superstition and worldliness." That the Queen is under God, the governor of all matters, *ecclesiastical* (not spiritual) and *civil*, Mr. Kelly says is "superstition and worldliness!" Prove it, Mr. Kelly, from the Word of God, that the consecration or separation to the work of the ministry in the church, as contained in our ritual, is an "offspring of "superstition and worldliness!" Give us plain chapter and verse on the subject. Do not make statements without proof, but tell us the "superstition" or "worldliness" in calling upon God in earnest prayer to send holy men into His vineyard. As to Article thirty-seven, tell us the "superstition" of having our Queen to be chief governor of all estates of the realm. Prove to us that the chief government we attribute to the queen's majesty is not an ordinance of God. Show that giving her "that only prerogative which we see to have been given always to all godly princes in Holy Scripture by God Himself" is the "offspring of superstition and worldliness." Remember this is what you have said, and this you are needs called upon to prove from God's Word.

Mr. Kelly next attacks the Articles as a *whole*. He says, "the Articles are eminently deficient in another way. They do not even *allude* to some of the weightiest of revealed truths. Thus, though the deity and personality of the Spirit are upheld, a dead and ominous silence reigns as to His regeneration, indwelling, and *other* operations. As far as this confession of faith is concerned, we could not know that there was such a thing as baptism by the Holy Ghost or His presence and gifts in the church." This is strange if true. Is there no allusion to regenera-

tion by the Holy Spirit in the twenty-seventh Article? Is not regeneration *directly* and *distinctly* referred to Him there? "Baptism is a sign of regeneration or new birth;" and a few lines further on, "the benefits" of *true* baptism, of which regeneration is one, are expressly ascribed to the Holy Ghost—baptism being a sign or seal of His previous operation on the heart. Is not baptism plainly declared to be an *instrument* through which the Holy Ghost operates? And yet Mr. Kelly says we could not know by these Articles that there was such a thing as baptism by the Holy Ghost, nor even that *there was such a Being in the Church?* Then again, as to the "operations" of the Spirit, are these not distinctly acknowledged in many of the Articles? Take, for instance, the seventeenth. Is not the calling of God's people out of the world ascribed to the Spirit? Does it not speak of the operations of "the Spirit working in them; mortifying in them the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things?" What do you mean, Mr. Kelly, by such unguarded statements? "Again," Mr. Kelly says, "where is the testimony to Christ's headship of the church? Where to His priesthood and advocacy? Where to the promised kingdom, to the restoration of Israel, to the blessing of the earth under His reign, and, above all, to the church's hope in His coming?" Is not, I ask, the church called all through these Articles *Christ's church?* Is not everything in that church referred to Him, for His glory, and, above all, is not His Word made the standard by which every thing is to be proved, and "whatsoever cannot be proved by it is not to be received?" Is not *this* acknowledging the headship of Christ? Again, in the tenth Article: "we have no power to do good works without the grace of God *by Christ* preventing us." Is not this acknowledging Christ's ever present advocacy rendering acceptable what would otherwise

be rejected? Is not His priesthood implied in this, as well as His advocacy? Nor only in this Article, but in several others also. Again, Mr. Kelly, I ask, would it not be better to express yourself more guardedly? But let me add, it never was intended by the compilers to embrace everything *we* consider of importance. All the other points in Mr. Kelly's category are debatable points. We do not absolutely demand them from God's people as articles of faith. Many a true child of God does not hold the "national restoration of Israel;" or see, with Mr. Kelly, as to the church's blessed hope. Why should we burden the consciences of the weak ones by requiring their consent to articles of faith they cannot acknowledge? Besides all this, if in order to make a *complete* confession of faith our compilers should have put in all those Articles the "Plymouth Brethren" consider important, what a confession it would be! What crude things would be in it! What a cumbrous load for a weak brother to be compelled to bear before he could become a member of the church! Mr. Kelly thinks our Articles a burdensome load *now*! What would they be then?

To pass on. Mr. Kelly says (page 10), "it is an utter mistake therefore that in the Establishment the authority of the Word is maintained." In the face of nearly all the Articles so directly referring every thing in the constitution and formulas of the church to the Word, and distinctly stating that "what cannot be proved thereby is not to be received," it is difficult to preserve one's Christian patience and forbearance. Let the Articles, however, speak for themselves on this point. Again, Mr. Kelly says, "the sixth Article merely asserts the sufficiency of Scripture *for salvation*." Is this true? Let us read it. "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that *whatsoever* is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of

any man that it should be believed as an article of faith." It asserts two things, the sufficiency of Scripture for salvation, and, secondly, "*whatsoever* is not read therein (about any matter) is not to be required of any man." Again, the twentieth Article says, "It is not lawful for the church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word." And yet Mr. Kelly says, "it is a *mistake* that the authority of the Word is maintained" in our church!

But, further on, Mr. Kelly says, "What avails the Christian's *assertion* of the Word as the only authority, if he comes to the conclusion that much in the Articles and Services is without and *against* Scripture." I call upon Mr. Kelly to prove, from the Word of God, what there is in our Articles or Services *against* that Word. I venture to assert that there is nothing in those Articles that is not entirely in accordance with the spirit of the Word of God, if not with the letter of it. We are tired of these heartless assertions. Come to the point, Mr. Kelly, and *prove* what you say.

Mr. Kelly next endeavours to fasten the charge of Romish doctrine upon the Church of England, from a consideration of her teaching on baptism, which he coolly denounces as "the remains of Popish darkness, from which the English Reformers had not wholly emerged." But where is the proof? How does he seek to substantiate his grave allegation? I might safely join issue by calling upon him to state the church's doctrine, and prove its alleged falsity by the Word of God. But now appears the uncandid and disingenuous conduct of the assailant. Hitherto Mr. Kelly had been making his strictures upon the church's Confession of Faith, her authorised standard of appeal in ascertaining her doctrinal views—namely, the Articles; but now he finds it convenient never once to appeal to them, though he scruples not to aver the church's doctrine on baptism is shrouded

in the "remains of Popish darkness." I ask, is this honest? Was Mr. Kelly in ignorance of any dogmatic teaching on the subject in the articles? I cannot think it. He has referred to those preceding and following which prove to demonstration that the charge of Popery he makes cannot be maintained. Yet we must not complain, he has not attempted to substantiate his charge by reference to the church's doctrinal statements, for he has equally avoided reference to the statements of Scripture on the subject. He has not adduced a single passage to contrast with, and to condemn what, he asserts to be the Popish teaching of the church on this subject. What is, then, his mode of attack? He selects from the church's services various passages which he dexterously joins together and leaves, in the hope that his readers' presumed ignorance will regard his allegation as thereby proved.

Now, what is the church's doctrine on this subject? "Sacraments ordained by Christ be not only badges or tokens of *Christian* men's profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and God's goodwill towards us, by the which He doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in Him" (Article 25).

"Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby *Christian* men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of regeneration, or new birth; whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism *rightly* are grafted into the church: the promises of forgiveness of sins, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are VISIBLY signed and sealed, faith is confirmed, and grace increased, by virtue of prayer unto God" (Article 27). This is the doctrine of the church; and as it was the deliberate and careful expression of the doctrinal views of the men who

themselves compiled the services, there can be no contradiction or opposition between the two. What, then, becomes of Mr. Kelly's charge of Popery? Which of the points of the church's doctrine on the subject is wrapped in "Popish darkness?" Let me repeat them for Mr. Kelly:—

1. Baptism is a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christian men are discerned from others not christened.

2. It is a sign of regeneration, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism *rightly* are grafted into the church.

3. A visible sign and seal of the promises of forgiveness of sins, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost.

4. Faith is confirmed and grace increased by virtue of prayer to God; which implies the previous possession of both, namely, faith and grace, by the person baptized.

Now, what is the Popish doctrine? Was Mr. Kelly ignorant of it; or did he feel that in stating it every intelligent reader would see its antagonism to the doctrine of the Church of England?—that by each successive statement the church disclaims the Popish doctrine of the sacraments acting "ex opere operato"—that she multiplies her averments further in Articles 25, 26, and 29, in disavowing, in every possible form of language, the Popish doctrine which places the efficacy of the sacraments in the *work done*, the mere reception of them, the external act performed by the priest—such as placing the consecrated host or wafer in the mouth of a dying sinner, or anointing him with the oil of extreme unction for the removal of the last remains of his sins. And yet such is the doctrine that Mr. Kelly, in his controversial zeal, attributes to the Church of England, and to the sainted men who compiled her formularies, and whose determined renunciation of these doctrines was

witnessed in their fiery martyrdoms at Smithfield. Mr. Kelly objects to our service for connecting the "remission of sins," "regeneration," "grafting into the body of Christ's church," with baptism; but he omits to tell us what his own views are as to the inward and spiritual grace of that sacrament. Have Mr. Kelly, and they who think with him, any view of the grace of baptism? Perhaps it may assist him in forming his ideas on the subject to be reminded of the grounds why our Services and Articles take the Scriptural position of connecting with the outward and visible sign, the inward and spiritual grace to which he objects as Popish. If we turn to the Scriptures we find what is the grace immediately connected with baptism. St. Peter thus addresses the Jews, in Acts ii. 38, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the *remission of sins*, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." In similar words does Ananias counsel Saul, Acts xxii. 16: "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins:" Again, Titus iii. 5: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." These are rather strong authorizations of the language used by our church, and to which Mr. Kelly objects. His impeachment thus extends farther than to the Church of England. He impugns, by direct implication, the Word of God itself. Perhaps this is the reason why he so studiously shunned reference thereto, while making his onslaught upon the Services of the Church of England.

But Mr. Kelly says, "The Baptismal service is said to be for believers; but how when infants are the subjects? Is it pretended that infants are believers?" Let me ask Mr. Kelly, if infants die in infancy, are they saved or lost? "Saved," you reply. If so, are not infants in the position of believers *while* infants?

baptism is administered to them. If they are capable of the inward and spiritual grace, and God receives them as possessing it, why should we refuse to acknowledge them as such in the eye of the church on earth? Baptism is the outward and visible sign of an *inward* grace, which we humbly believe has been granted in answer to prayer. And if we say it is granted, after believing prayer is offered, are we wrong? Does not God say, "ask, and ye *shall* receive?" and if we ask and believe, and say so, is this contrary to God's Word?

But Mr. Kelly finds what he calls the false doctrine still more offensive in the Service for those of Riper Years. He says, "The doctrine of this Service is that adults who are supposed to have true repentance and faith, are viewed as *not born again* till they are baptized; they are regenerate only thereon or therein." Now, what does Mr. Kelly do here? He assumes a meaning for the term regeneration, and then finds fault with the Service, because with his assumed meaning for the word he boasts of discovering "false doctrine."

Regeneration is often said to signify a moral or internal change of character, or the first operation of grace on the heart, originating spiritual life. If this were so, regeneration, in this sense, is required as a pre-requisite to adult baptism—at least its profession by the candidate is required, for it must precede the exercise of repentance and faith, neither of which can exist without spiritual life, the result of God's grace; and therefore the Service cannot, without plain contradiction, pray that God would at baptism regenerate the adult in the sense of bestowing the first beginnings of divine life, which has been previously evidenced in repentance and faith. But once distinguish between things which differ, and the whole Service is in consistent harmony with Scripture as well as in itself. Distinguish between the first beginnings of spiritual life—of which repentance and faith are the

evidences—and regeneration, and it will become at once apparent that as the babe does not become possessed of natural life at the moment of natural birth into this world, but is then introduced into a new and different external state, so the first beginnings of spiritual life witnessed by the possession of repentance and faith, and which owe their existence to the operation of sovereign grace, are the necessary conditions and preliminary for the candidate for adult baptism, passing through the metaphorical birth which introduces him into God's church, "the blessed company of all faithful people." Regeneration, in all these services, means the open admission of candidates into the church; their visible adoption as the Lord's children, of which water is the sign and pledge. What God has secretly done in the wondrous workings of Divine grace, is beyond human cognizance; still faith and repentance, for which the first beginning of Divine grace in the soul is the necessary condition, are demanded and "required of persons who come to be baptized;" and they who have them are required by Christ to testify the same before men, by being baptized. Thus they are acknowledged, and become openly before men, disciples of Christ by baptism, having been previously, but secretly, such before God. And such profession of discipleship is designated by our Lord being "born again" of water. "Except a man be born again of water" (John iii. 5). "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved" (Mark xvi.). In strict accordance with which statements of Divine truth our Service says of the baptized, "These persons are regenerate," are, as the following words explain the meaning, "grafted into the body of Christ's church."

I would appeal, therefore, to the reader. Does our church or Mr. Kelly "bear false witness to the baptismal services and their doctrine?"

Mr. Kelly next quarrels with the term "ark of

Christ's church," used in our baptismal service, and says, "it is a very bad misapplication of the type, for it puts the church in the place of Christ." This is very absurd. What little paltry things the "Plymouth Brethren" catch at! Even the misuse of a *word* is fastened upon the church as a foul offence. But stay. What was the ark? It was a vessel filled with living souls. The ark itself was a type of Christ; the souls in that ark were a type of those in Christ, namely, God's church. When a person is truly baptized, he *is* received into Christ's church—he is not only in the ark, but he is in Christ's church. Christ and the church are one; and in applying the term Ark to the church of Christ, we see no such offensive application as Mr. Kelly sees.

But, as Mr. Kelly says, "letting this pass," we proceed to another point of much more importance. He says (page 12), "Is it pretended that infants are believers? or do *you* believe that the Establishment 'exalts the Word of God alone' in the scheme of sponsors, that is other people vowing repentance and faith for the unconscious babe?" I trust, my dear brother, you *do* believe this, and that you believe it because it is sanctioned by God's Word. The scheme of sponsors is clearly sanctioned in Deuteronomy xxix. 10—16, and to which I beg to refer Mr. Kelly. The sponsor is one who stands between God and the child, and who undertakes on its behalf that it shall renounce the devil and serve God. The child thus enters into a solemn covenant with God, through the medium of its sponsor. Now mark, how truly Scriptural this is;—"Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your *little ones*, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp that thou shouldst *enter into covenant* with the Lord thy God and into His oath which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day: *that He may establish thee to day for a people unto Himself*, and that He may be unto thee a God, as He hath said unto thee, and *as He hath*

sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God, and *also with him that is NOT HERE with us this day (unborn children).*" Now, what do we find the children of Israel doing here by God's command? Exactly what our church does by the same high and holy authority. Here we find "*little ones,*" and children *not yet born,* entering into an engagement with God to renounce the devil and to serve Him! How could such do it, except through the medium of sponsors? How could unborn children enter into a covenant without some one acting as sponsor on their behalf? But now, I fancy Mr. Kelly flying off to that common refuge and last resource of "Plymouth Brethren"—"oh, that is *Jewish!*" Nay, look at the passage! It is the covenant that God made with "*Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*" It is the *Abrahamic* covenant, not the Jewish. And if you turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Epistle to the Galatians, you there find it is the *Abrahamic* covenant that God has made with His church now, and that the children of faith are "blessed with faithful Abraham." We there find that same covenant made with Abraham, and subsequently enjoined on the children of Israel in Deuteronomy xxix., again enjoined on the church of Christ in this day. So much for the Scriptural character of our baptismal service.

But what do we find Mr. Kelly next doing? Incredible as it may appear, it is nevertheless true, we find him attacking the reading of the *Word of God* in our church! In trying to show that the service of our church is not for believers, he finds fault with our using the opening passages of the Prayer-book, with one or more of which it is usual to commence the service. He says, "can you pretend that God meant them to open the worship of His

assembly?" Yes, Mr. Kelly, we *do* believe God meant that *His Word* should be read in the assembly. We do believe that we honour God by *opening* it with His Word, and *closing* it with His Word. If the "Plymouth Brethren" prefer to open and close their worship with a hymn or prayer from the lips of a sinful, erring man, *we* prefer to open and close ours with the voice of the Living God. And as the church of Christ (as I have before proved) is made up of real and professing Christians, we think there is nothing like the Word of God for reaching the hearts of all. But the idea of proving that the service is not for believers from these sentences is simply nonsense. I myself have heard "the Brethren" read these very passages in their own assembly. If their assembly consists only of *true believers*, why read them there? Let Mr. Kelly answer. But what does he mean? Whether the assembly be Christian or otherwise, can the reading of God's Word be out of place? Can the reading of passages from God's Word prove that the book from which they are read is not for believers? As well might it be said that the Bible was not for believers.

Mr. Kelly next attacks the Absolution. He says, "if we regard it as not going beyond a declaration of the Gospel, the supposition is destroyed that only believers are in view." Indeed Mr. Kelly! And do you not think *Christians* require absolution? "No, I do not." Do you not think Christians commit sins and trespasses which require to be forgiven? "I do not believe that Christians have any sins." It is very evident you do not from this statement. (Such is the awful doctrine held by the Plymouth Brethren, as I shall hereafter show, and evidently from this statement held by Mr. Kelly himself.) Then what means the Word of God (1 John i. 8, 9)? "If we say *we* have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess *our sins*, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to

cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This states plainly that a believer *has* sins to be forgiven. The language of our Absolution is merely a *declaration* of God's forgiveness to those *Christians* who have truly and earnestly confessed their sins. What has this to do with the services of the church not being for believers? If it prove anything, it proves just the very reverse of what you say.

Mr. Kelly's next attack is on our matchless Litany, and one of our Collects. It is the old stereotyped objection, that has been answered hundreds of times over. Of the former he says, "where is the spirit of adoption there? Where the peaceful dependence of a child resting in his Father's love? Where a soul strong in the grace that is in Christ? There is the cry of 'miserable sinners.'" And of the Collect, he says, "how can it be said of Christians, *though we be tied and bound with the chain of our sins*, yet let the pitifulness of thy great mercy loose us!" Who can fail to see in these objections of Mr. Kelly the awful doctrine which he holds, namely, that believers *have no sins* to confess. Fearful heresy! and yet this is the *chief* feature of "Plymouth Brethrenism." But more of this hereafter. In reply to Mr. Kelly's remarks on the Litany, let me say, that all the *extempore* prayers ever uttered have never been able to come up to this precious service. Let the prayers the Plymouth Brethren or any other body of Christians in the world, have ever prayed, be taken down, and placed side by side with this matchless compilation. Will they bear comparison? Is there anything so spiritual, so heavenly, so comprehensive, so manifestly bearing the stamp of God's Holy Spirit? Are not all other prayers as the shadow to the substance in comparison? If any human compilation could possibly be inspired, would it not be our noble Litany? And then let me add, Mr. Kelly, that a child of God, happy and rejoicing in the truth that Christ has *made* him free, can confess himself a

“miserable sinner.” Nay, more, the holiest and happiest saints have ever been those who felt the heinous character of sin most, and confessed it most frequently. We confess it, because God’s Word commands us to do so. We can say, “neither take thou vengeance on our sins;” for although we know Christ has taken away all our sins once and for ever, yet have we “the feet” coming in contact with the world. Our daily trespasses, or “sins,” as St. John calls them, require to be confessed and forgiven. And sin, whether it be in our nature or in the form of a daily trespass, must be hateful to a holy God. If it be not offensive to God, if it be not amenable to His wrath, then is it no sin at all. Thank God, we know what it is to be joyful and happy in the Lord, and yet feel and confess our indwelling corruptions and daily sins. God keep us from ever thinking that we have no sins to confess. God keep us from the awful doctrine, that because Christ has taken away all our sins, therefore *we* have none to mourn over or *confess*. Nay, it is impossible that the believer can ever set a true and adequate value on the blood of Jesus, except as he feels his daily sins requiring the atoning efficacy of that blood to purge them away. It is the consciousness of my own vileness, and my indwelling corruption, that keeps up in my soul a high estimate of the precious blood of Christ. Nothing else will ever do it. It is possible in *profession* to have a high estimate of the blood, while *individually*, through not feeling our sins, to have a very low appreciation of it. I fear this is the case with many of the “Plymouthists.” God grant it may not be so. God grant that, if any have fallen into this deadly error, He may, in infinite mercy, rescue them from their awful state, and bring them back to the fold from which they have so sadly wandered. This is my earnest prayer.

PART II.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—I turn from the consideration of Mr. Kelly's remarks on our church* and ritual to one of a much more painful nature, namely, that of "The Brethren." I feel grieved to have to expose the errors of a system in which so many of God's dear people are found, and many of my own highly-valued and beloved friends; but truth requires it. I cannot, indeed, say *all*. I would fain cast the mantle of charity over *some* things I know. To disclose them would only cause the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. They must be in oblivion. I would not, indeed, have ventured to let the public take a peep *inside* had it not been for the heartless attacks they are continually making, on every side, on our church, and for the assiduous, persevering manner in which they are going about, not to bring sinners to Christ, but to draw away God's people from our church, and from other denominations of Christians. Yet even with all this I might have been silent, had it not been for Mr. Kelly's tract about them, in which he has so artfully concealed the truth, distorted facts, and put an appearance on his statement of "The Brethren" so calculated to mislead, and draw aside the unwary and ignorant.

To turn then to the Letter. In speaking of the origin of the "Brethren," Mr. Kelly says, "they prayed, they mourned over the low condition of themselves." Never had they more reason to do this than at the present moment. Never have they been so low as they are now. Split up into no less than three or four different sections, each of which, to my

own knowledge, has been in the *habit* of saying the bitterest things of the other, and very often placing them outside the pale of Christianity, they have never had such reason to confess themselves "miserable sinners" as now. Mr. Kelly goes on to say, "on one ex-clergyman special honour was put by the Lord: for He was pleased to revive, (through him) from the Scriptures, the mystery of Christ and the church, the true character of our hope in the Lord's coming, the personal presence and operations of the Holy Ghost in the church and the Christian." I happen to know who this ex-clergyman is, and I must now add, that all is not stated here. Long before this ex-clergyman left the church, a clergyman, who now stands high in our Irish University, wrote and preached on all these subjects. He it was who first revived these grand and glorious truths. His books were purchased, and literally *devoured* by "the Brethren." So little were his views appreciated that he was *written down* in all the leading periodicals of the day. He was called a fanatic, a madman, a dreamer of dreams, and the like. A few godly ministers embraced his views, now held by hundreds in our church, and acknowledged by every well-taught Christian. The "Brethren" read them on all sides, and highly appreciated them. Here then was the first dawning of the light, and *not* where Mr. Kelly places it. The clergyman I allude to is the Rev. William de Burgh, D.D., Incumbent of St. John's, Sandymont, Dublin, Donnellan Lecturer in the University of Dublin.* Let the reader of this letter only read his publications, and he will find all these views clearly set forth.

Mr. Kelly goes on to state what are the views

* Author of "A Commentary on the Book of Psalms," "An Exposition of the Apocalypse," "Lectures on the Second Advent," "A Compendium of Hebrew Grammar," "Tracts for the Church," &c., &c.

of "the Brethren." He says, "they welcomed in His Name (Christ's) *every saint*; they owned the members of *the Church of God wherever* they might be; they saw clearly that the Scriptural ground of meeting is Christ's body." Mr. Kelly then triumphantly asks, "Do you know of any Christians, save 'Brethren,' who are simply, thoroughly acting on this basis *now*? Is it not large enough to admit *every saint*, who walks as such, without imposing a *single condition* which he does not own? I see this basis and no other taken among Brethren, and among Brethren only." One of the worst parts of Mr. Kelly's letter is the portion I have just quoted. In no other are facts so artfully concealed as in this. How Mr. Kelly could have come to put this on paper, well knowing, as he must have done, that the conduct of the Brethren was *the very opposite*, baffles all *my* comprehension. "The Brethren" *now* "receiving *every saint*," and "without imposing a *single condition!*" Mr. Kelly, do you not know *right well* that this is not the case? Do you not know that even in your own meeting, in Guernsey, this is not the case? Right well do you know it, and so do I too. If a child of God comes to you from Mr. Newton's congregation, would you receive him at your table? No, you would not, although he may be a Christian, and walking consistently as such. How then can you say you receive every child of God "*without imposing a single condition which he does not own?*" Do you not treat Christians coming from "Bethesda" in the same way? Have you not now scores of godly people, whom you have refused to receive, sitting on the *outside benches* in your meetings, and simply because they have been in communion with Mr. Newton, or with Bethesda, and do not prefer to renounce that connexion? Have I not myself seen these people, talked with them; and have I not been

present when these people have been refused communion? Are not these very people, so refused, some of the most precious of God's people living? Have I not heard your own people say so, and call them "dear brother" and "dear sister?" Can I not even mention the names of some of these so *shut out*? and do I not know that they are not isolated cases, but that they are to be found in London, Edinburgh, Dublin, and other places? And yet you say, Mr. Kelly, that "*now* you welcome in Christ's name *every* saint, and that *without imposing a single condition!*" How *could* you put such a statement in print? Are you not imposing conditions which have not the slightest colour of foundation in God's Word? Are not your tests now, not "Christ," but "Ebrington Street," or "Bethesda," or some other place of the kind? These are the new tests among you, Mr. Kelly. It is not Christ now, it is something else, though you strive most assiduously to conceal it from Christians in other denominations, for fear your influence should be damaged, or that you should be checked in your proselytizing courses. Not very long ago, a dear friend of mine spoke to your principal teacher, in his meeting in —, about these terms of communion. What did that teacher say to my friend? "A godly man coming from the Establishment we *could* receive, but not one coming from Mr. Newton or Bethesda." Is this receiving "every saint as such," Mr. Kelly? And yet you can point out, neither in Mr. Newton nor Bethesda, any vital error *plainly* condemned in God's Word. I challenge you to do this. And yet you receive every Christian as such! But, perhaps, you will say, "all this is merely *individual* conduct. I am not defending our *practice*, but our *principles*." This I know is your resort, when hemmed in. But it will not pass here, for this is done everywhere among you, has been approved of by all your people, and has become

a fixed principle among you. Nay, you are acting upon it at this very moment. Mr. Newton, Mr. Craik, Mr. Muller, and hosts of others I could name, although some of the dearest and most honoured of God's people in this kingdom, you would not receive at one of your meetings, Mr. Kelly, and you know it as well as I do. And yet, in the face of all this, you could write without a blush, "we receive *every* saint without imposing a *single condition* he does not allow; this is the principle we are *simply and thoroughly acting on now!*" I pass on from this, and leave it to tell its own tale.

Mr. Kelly says (page 25), "love" is not the true centre of union, but "Christ Himself." I do not dispute the fact, that Christ is the spiritual Head and centre of the church. Thankful I am that He is so in our own beloved church. Thankful, should we all be, that in our Articles and Formularies this is the position assigned to Him, the Queen being, under God, the ecclesiastical head. All this is in perfect harmony with God's Holy Word. But to be told that "love" forms no *part* of the centre of unity, is surely running against the light of revealed truth. Love is God Himself, for "God is love." "Little children *love* one another." "By this shall all men *know* that ye are my disciples (or my church), if ye have *love* one to another." "Being knit together in love." "Above all these things put on *love*, which is the *bond* of perfectness." It may be said, "this is a *principle*, not a *centre*." True, but it is a *part* of that centre too. Whoever thought of saying that "love," or "truth," *apart* from Christ was the centre? Did you, Mr. Dobree? Does any Christian think of saying such a thing? But what is all this but "hair-splitting?" Christ as the centre, *includes* "love," and "truth," and "holiness." To talk of Christ being the "centre," and these being "principles," is making a distinction which, I hesitate not to say, is

unsanctioned by any plain passage in God's Word.

Mr. Kelly (in page 21) has uttered words rashly and unlovingly. I pray God may not lay it to his charge. He says, "Now, I freely acknowledge the shortcomings of the Brethren and my own; but I am thoroughly satisfied it is of God that we should not have communion with a congregation which deliberately received the intelligent partizans of a *blasphemer against Christ.*" Here Mr. Kelly contradicts all he said before about their principle being to receive "*every saint.*" Here he plainly asserts that he believes it is of God that they should *not* receive *all* God's people. He says it is *of God*, but furnishes not a single passage of God's Word to prove it. *Granted* that it is of God not to receive a "blasphemer," prove from Scripture—a plain, undistorted passage from God's Word—that you were right in not receiving any member of a Church who had received his *partizans*—not *himself*—but his *partizans*. Mr. Kelly knows he cannot produce a single passage for any such a purpose, if those *partizans* be themselves sound in faith. He cannot produce such a passage. There is not "a shadow of a shade" of warrant for it in the Bible. And yet this is one of Mr. Kelly's fundamental principles. This is what he and all *his* party among the Brethren have been acting on for years. This is *the great foundation* of "Plymouth Brethrenism"—a principle for which there is not in the Word of God, a shadow of warrant; the deliberate avowed rejection of hundreds of godly people; the casting out and branding them as "*partizans of a blasphemer*" hundreds of those whom Christ has received, and whom God has publicly and wondrously honoured! This, let me repeat it, is *gloried in* by the Brethren; is put forward publicly in print, and unblushingly claims for its sanction the Word of God! And yet Mr. Kelly could say "*we receive every Christian without imposing a single condition!*"

Let the reader of these pages mark this. Here is the acknowledgment of one of the principal teachers among the "Plymouth Brethren," that it is *of God* that hundreds of godly Christians should be cast out from communion with them; that it is *of God* that those whom *Christ* has received should be shut out by the "Plymouth Brethren," and should be branded as "partizans of a blasphemers!" If this does not shew that *they shut out* those whom *God has received*—if it does not shew to every man of common discernment the hollow, rotten, anti-scriptural principles of Plymouth Brethrenism, then nothing does. Christians of sense and understanding, "I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say."

But it was not about this, exactly, I wished to speak. It was about Mr. Kelly's unloving assertion, "blasphemer against Christ." We all know to whom he applies these unkind words—it is to Mr. B. W. Newton. Now, I think Mr. Kelly is bound, in common honour, to prove his statement. He is bound to point out *how* Mr. Newton has blasphemed Christ; to show what blasphemy he teaches, or has taught; what false doctrines he holds; what views he propounds that plainly violate God's Word. He is bound to do it, I say. God's truth requires it, and God's people require it, for there are multitudes of them who believe (myself among the number) that Mr. Newton is a child of God, and that he does not teach, and never has taught, any blasphemy against Christ. I fear, indeed, that "love" is not "the centre" of unity among the Brethren in Guernsey at all events. The "centre" there has not expressed himself as a representative of his Master. Pity that love is not the centre, or that it is not more displayed in the centre. The truth is, when sectarianism and bitterness towards other systems creep into the heart, *love* is driven out. And in no body of professing Christians is there more *profession* of love, combined with

such a want of it towards our church, as among the Plymouth Brethren, and for the simple reason that none are so bitter, so narrow-minded, so wrapped up in their own little, petty, hair-splitting thoughts and views of things as they are. Alas! "how are the mighty fallen!" They were very different at one time.

But let me pass on. Mr. Kelly says (page 27), in speaking of the liberty of Christians to teach and pray in their meetings, "they are as free as any of us to help in thanksgiving, prayer, or a word of edification. Where is this done save only among Brethren?" Very plausible, Mr. Kelly! How captivatingly you set your system before the world, to woo and win the sheep into the one true and only fold, for such you doubtless think yours to be. But *do* you afford liberty to Christians to minister in your assemblies? I know that it is in name only, and not in reality. Let me tell what happened, on more occasions than one, at *several* of your meetings. There were several "godly Brethren" whose teaching was acceptable to many, but not to two or three of the *leading* Brethren. The "leading Brethren" who "*rule*" your assemblies, and who sit at stated times in quiet conclave to consider matters going on among you, for some *personal* reasons, did not like these Brethren. It soon became known to the weaker ones, and of course all *looked up* to the leaders, and were determined to carry out their wishes. They felt they must do so if the assembly were to be kept together. Therefore every time these several Brethren I have mentioned got up to speak or pray, there was a general coughing, scraping of feet, some leaving the room, the majority refusing to kneel. This went on Sunday after Sunday. The meeting was actually closed. At last these Brethren were obliged to yield to the pressure. They gave up. Yet numbers were edified with their godly teaching and prayer. Well they might; for, as I am aware, there never were more devoted or spiritually taught

Brethren among you. No matter, they were *put down*. And this, Mr. Kelly, is your boasted liberty, that all among you may minister! Nor are these isolated cases. No; they are common. The fact is, no deacons in a Dissenting chapel are more exclusive or harder to please than the few ruling Brethren over some of your meetings. It is well known they have to be pleased; and the weaker ones have to carry out the views of this *secret* hierarchy. Liberty to minister! Yes, if the *ruling Brethren* have no personal pique or other objections. There they sit at their weekly meetings, and every little matter is conned over; and these two or three little popes feel themselves the head, and rule arbitrarily enough. Oh, is this liberty! Far rather give *me* the church that plainly and avowedly places its supervision in the hands of bishops and ministers, than this *secret consistory* that does *the same thing*, only in a much more arbitrary and dogmatic manner. Mr. Kelly, never speak about *liberty* in your assemblies. There is more bondage among your people than there is, in many instances, in the Church of Rome itself; and bitterly do many of them feel the galling yoke. Often have they spoken to me about it. Often does it kindle and keep alive the smouldering ashes in the heart, and goad them to words and deeds not fitting to be named. And this is *the* church of God! This is "God's gathering," in contrast with all other denominations which are "*man's!*"

But mark, in the next place, another feature of "Plymouth Brethrenism." They are discerners of the *heart*. Their system is founded on it. They judge the hearts of all those who sit down among them. Mr. Kelly says (page 28), "To walk and worship with those that are evidently of the world, and *have not a pure heart* wherewith to call on the Lord, is a sin." And can you tell me, Mr. Kelly, when the people kneel down to pray in our churches,

who have "a pure heart," and who have not? Are you in *God's* stead to do this? Granted that the *outward walk* of many is not what it should be, can you tell what their *hearts* are in the house of God? Oh! shame on such a spirit, such presumptuous interference with the prerogative of the Almighty!

The passages Mr. Kelly has quoted, bearing on the separation of God's people from evil, are all beside the purpose. All that he has brought forward only teach us that we are to put out of the church the *openly* wicked and immoral. This is the very thing we do in our church. He has misapplied passages, too. Passages which have reference only to *individual* conduct, are applied to the church in its *corporate* capacity. I shall only now refer to one—the parable of the tares and the wheat. I believe this refers to the *church*. If it referred to the world, there would be no sense in it whatever. The Lord says, "the field is the *world*"—true, it was the world *then*. The church was not formed. It was, in deed and in truth, the world *then*. What else could it be! But let Mr. Kelly and the "Plymouth Brethren" have their way. Let them give us an interpretation of the parable, if it refer to the world, and *not to the church*. If it be the world, when was the good seed sown? Who were the men that slept? What were the tares *afterwards* sown, and when were they sown? If the parable apply to the *world*, there is no possible solution of these questions. If *Adam* was the seed sown, who were the men that slept? If the seed was sown at the time of Christ who were the tares sown *afterwards*? Were there no tares in the world before? All this is absurd. There is no possible solution to these questions compatible with such a view. The truth is clear and simple to every unprejudiced mind. Mr. Kelly and the Plymouth Brethren, in their zeal against our church, pervert the Scriptures. "They darken counsel by words

without knowledge." The field is the professing Christian church. In our Lord's time it was the world. The tares and the wheat, the professors of Christianity and real Christians, are to grow together till the Lord comes. We are not to put these professors out. They are to be in till Christ Himself shall come and "purge His floor." But now, I fancy; Mr. Kelly saying, "this militates against what you said just now, that the openly wicked ought to be put away." Yes, Mr. Kelly; but *tares* are not *openly* wicked. The tare is a spurious kind of *wheat*; so like the wheat, that scarcely any one can distinguish between it and the wheat till harvest comes. In the Word of God, Christians are compared to *wheat*, mere professors to *tares*, and openly wicked to *chaff*. Now, we see clearly the meaning of the parable. "Let *real* Christians and the *professing* Christians both grow together till the harvest." This is clear, from what our Lord says as to the difficulty of *discerning* them, "lest *while ye gather the tares ye root up the wheat* also." There would be no such difficulty in discerning chaff, or openly wicked, if it were the *world* the Saviour referred to. But it is professors, so like the true, yet children of the wicked one. But that the field, then the world, is now the church, is evident from other parables in this same chapter. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind, good and bad." Mark; it is not *all the fish in the sea*, but a *gathering out* of the sea. So of the tares and the wheat; it is not *all the world* but a *gathering out* of the world—a professing church gathered out, and consisting of tares and wheat. It is in this way that one parable explains the other. And that this explanation is the true one may be inferred from the fact, that both parables are compared to the same thing, namely, "The kingdom of heaven." So is the church here. The Lord gathers into this net pro-

fessors and real believers. At the end of the world (not till then), the bad shall be cast away. All the Epistles of the New Testament present the churches thus to our view. The seven in Asia had good and bad in them, but there is no command to eject them. On the contrary (and the Plymouth Brethren should mark it well), they are commanded to "hold that fast which thou hast *till I come*." It is of no avail for Mr. Kelly to say as he does (page 38), that these were really "churches." That is not the point. The point is this, when wicked professors are found in a church, are they to be put out? Because our church contains false professors, are they to be put out? The Bible clearly intimates that they are *not*, and these seven churches, as well as the parable of the tares and the wheat, are a proof of it. No, Mr. Kelly, the Lord's Word says very plainly, "let both grow together till the harvest." But let us look at a further proof of this. Come; we will cite to the bar a church of the New Testament, which, with all the charges of wickedness, and false profession against the Establishment, was certainly as bad, if not worse. And yet it is called "the church of God," and its members are called "saints," too—of course in an *ecclesiastical* sense. I allude to the church of Corinth.

There were the following evils and evil persons in that church:—

1. There were those who were not reconciled to God—unbelievers; see the *last* clause of 2 Cor. v. 20.

2. There were some who denied the resurrection—worse than *Rationalism!*—1 Cor. xv. 12.

3. There were some who "*knew not God*;" 1 Cor. xv. 34.

4. There were open sinners; 2 Cor. xiii. 2.

5. There were evidently many not in the faith; 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

6. There were divisions and heresies among them; 1 Cor. xi. 18, 19.

7. There were those, evidently, who respected idolatrous worship, and adhered in some measure to it: 1 Cor. vii. 10.

8. There were those who were *drunk* at the Lord's table; 1 Cor. xi. 21.

9. There was fornication among them, such as was not fit to be named—open immorality. Here, however, is the command to put the person away; 1 Cor. v. 1, 13.

Now, put all these together, and see whether we have anything worse in the Church of England. Unbelievers, deniers of the resurrection, those who knew not God, open sinners, many not in the faith, half heathenish idolaters, drunkards, fornicators, divisions, heresies, &c. What a filthy stream! And yet all addressed as the "*church of God*;" them that are "*sanctified in Christ Jesus*;" "called to be saints;" 1 Cor. i. 2. Now, how is all this to be accounted for, except on the same principle as the tares and the wheat? How are the terms "church," "saint," and "sanctified" to be understood, excepting in a twofold sense, ecclesiastical and spiritual? How are we to be clear on the subject, except from the fact, that the invisible church is *within* the visible? This makes all clear, and harmonizes with the rest of God's Word.

I have just two more points, and then I have done with Mr. Kelly's tract. In page 37, in a note at foot, he says, "Are those who are *not of God* members of Christ? The Catechism *says so*." Pray tell us, Mr. Kelly, where the Catechism says anything of the kind? This is another of your rash, hasty assertions, without a shadow of foundation. The Catechism teaches, what the Word of God teaches, the personal recognition of the baptized person as a member of Christ, that he should reckon himself one with Christ; Rom. vi. 10, 3, 4; Gal. iii. 26, 27. If Mr. Kelly speaks as unguardedly as he writes, he is a most unfit man to be the "centre" of a Christian church. These are

shocking statements to make, without having, either in letter or in spirit, the slightest foundation. Be cautious, Mr. Kelly, and, in your reply to this letter, study correctness a little more. Remember what the Word of God says, true of our speaking as of our acting, "He that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in *much*." "For every idle word men shall give an account." Be careful, then, what you say.

Lastly, Mr. Kelly says (page 39), "From Mr. Darby's lectures on the Seven Churches, you have gathered the thought, adopted by many Christians at various times, that besides the primary application of the seven churches to the literal 'Asiatic churches,' a complete picture is furnished of the responsible professing body, from St. John's day till the close." We here notice the assumption of "the Plymouth Brethren." They coolly tell us that we are indebted to *them* for these truths. Yes, such is the naughty pride of some members of this body, that they actually think and say that all spiritual light has come from *them*. Many have told me this. And Mr. Kelly, in more instances than one, implies this in his tract. I beg to tell Mr. Kelly, that the view he mentions, as having been put forward by Mr. Darby, was publicly preached and put forward in a book on the seven churches, by the Rev. James Kelly, Incumbent of St. James's Episcopal Chapel, London, long before Mr. Darby's book was ever written, or, I believe, before he ever went among Brethren. This book was bought and read by most of the "Plymouth Brethren," and is now in the possession of many of them. It was from him that the Brethren themselves got these views. They have nothing new among them, that was not put forward by Dr. de Burgh, Dr. R. S. Maitland, and Rev. James Kelly, and others, long before one of *their* books ever appeared on the subject. So much for the origin of truths on which the Brethren *pride* themselves of being the authors.

I have now done with Mr. Kelly's pamphlet, but,

before drawing to a close, I shall make a few remarks on some of the principal errors in principle and in practice, which *at present* exist among "the Plymouth Brethren."

One of the worst features among them, is the notion of sinful impeccability. Having come to Christ, and been accepted by Him, and having had all sin put away by "His one offering once offered," they imagine that to confess themselves sinners is wrong. They say, "Christ has put away all sin. I have none." While this is blessedly true, that Christ has put away all sin, is it not vitally wrong to say, we are not to confess our sins? Does not the believer sin daily? Is he not *commanded* to confess his sins? Would God command us to confess that which is not a burden to the conscience and the heart? Has not a believer his trespasses or sins, his indwelling corruptions, to mourn over and confess daily? "No," say the Plymouth Brethren, "to confess yourself 'a miserable sinner,' is to place yourself again under bondage. We have none to confess. Christ took them all away. What have we to do any more with these!" What says God's Word? "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." This is said of Christians—of those, all whose sins were put away by Christ. But the reference here is to our *daily* sins, and which again require to be confessed and to be forgiven. Nay, more, the forgiveness of these daily trespasses is made *dependent* on the confession of them. Mark the words, "If we confess . . . God is faithful and just to forgive." How awful then to try to ignore this truth as the Plymouth Brethren do! What an awful state to arrive at, that we are not to confess our sins because in truth we have none! And let not Mr. Kelly say, this is not the case. It *is* the case. It is the notion deeply imbedded in the minds and hearts of nearly all of

them. Acts speak louder than words. It shews itself in all their prayers and supplications. You never hear (or rarely ever) confession of sin in one of them. I myself have heard hundreds of them pray, hundreds and hundreds of times over, and yet I cannot recollect one single instance in which I ever heard confession of sin form any part of their prayers! Is not this an awful thing to think of? Does not *this* show, more plainly than any statement of mine, that they believe they have no sins to confess? Oh, human heart of man, how will not the deceiver work upon thee to accomplish his purposes! How fearfully thou canst distort God's truth, and make the heart to believe it! God keep us all from the awful delusion into which many of these people have fallen, and which is now showing its effects in their bitter spirit and their manifold divisions and heresies!

Another sad feature among them is this, that while all of them (with few exceptions) repudiate infant baptism, and affirm that it is not baptism at all, they have, by far the greater portion of them, never been baptized. They hold that baptism is a divine institution; that God has enjoined it on all believers; and yet, strange to say, more than half of their number have never been baptized. In saying this, I am speaking from personal knowledge of facts. They are never warned by their teachers of the sin of living in disobedience to God's express command. They never hear one word about the subject. They continue from year to year in open disobedience to God's Word; and except it is laid on the conscience of *individuals* among them to undergo the rite, they would never receive the slightest remonstrance or warning from any of their teachers about this flagrant sin. Although God's Word *associates baptism with salvation*, yet it matters not to them. They remain in the same state. Is not this awful! Living year after year in open disobedience to one of God's plainest

and most solemn commands! Say not, "this is failure in practice, and has nothing to do with our principles." Is it not a principle when your teachers—not any of them—ever speak about it, never enjoin it, never warn or remonstrate about it? Is it not a principle (and I am stating a fact) that they think it a secondary matter, and that the soul can be saved without it? If Tractarians have erred by making too much of God's command, have not the Plymouthists erred on the far worse side of making too little of it—nay, more—of making *nothing* of it? Judge, reader, what I say.

Look again at another awful feature that characterizes them. They will tell you, as some of their principal teachers have told me, that all the New Testament is not for the church; that the four gospels, excepting so far as spiritual principles may be derived from them, are not for the church; that only the Epistles are for the church, and that there are portions, even of these, not for the church. I have been told so repeatedly by their most eminent teachers. Is not this fearful? Are we safe in their company on such matters? Should we not, for the glory of Christ, watch and weigh well everything that emanates from them, lest as the serpent beguiled Eve, our souls should be seduced by the new truths they are so fond of putting forward, from the simple truth as it is in Jesus? Oh, in these slippery days, when Rationalism and every form of heresy is abroad, should we not "try the spirits whether they be of God," particularly if those spirits come before us as "angels of light," dressed in their most attractive spiritual garb. Now more than ever, when the Lord is at hand. Now more than ever, when peal after peal of warning is coming down from the watch-tower on the heights of Zion, "behold the Bridegroom cometh." Reader, watch the spirits; try the spirits. "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

Let me enumerate several other features that characterize these people. They teach that we should never address the Holy Spirit in prayer; that "the righteousness of Christ" is an unscriptural expression, and should never be used; that the first day of the week is not to be kept holy; that to observe it as the Sabbath is not enjoined on Christians; and that the moral law is not the believer's rule of life. These are views which have all been held sacred by the dearest of God's people. They have been the comfort of many now in glory. They have God's Word to sanction them. But now all are rudely swept aside by these lights of modern times.

There is only one feature more that I shall refer to, before I quote a few passages from God's Word in support of some of the points I have alluded to as rejected by them. The feature, I refer to, is that Christ did not fulfil the law *for us*. This is broadly stated in Mr. Darby's late works, and whatever he puts forward, I need not say, is soon law and Gospel with all the Plymouth Brethren. This is terrible!

I need not quote passages to prove the contrary. The New Testament is full of them. But is it not awful to think of this dreadful error. And is it not more awful still, to think of what may next proceed from these people; what terrible heresy may emerge from them under the distorted garb of God's Holy Word.

Let me now refer to the points before mentioned. Is not the Holy Spirit one with Christ? Should not the same adoration be paid to Him as to the Saviour? Is not "the righteousness of Christ" a perfectly Scriptural expression? See 2 Peter i. 1: "To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of our God *and Saviour*" (margin). Is not this a plain expression as to the term "righteousness of Christ?" Is not the Sabbath a divine institution, given for *man* apart from every considera-

tion of *dispensation*? Was it not instituted by God at the creation?—Genesis ii. 1. Has it ever been revoked? Again, as to the moral law. Is it not “holy, just, and good?” Is it not held up before the Christian church to be obeyed? See Ephesians vi. 2, 3. And is not the *Jewish* blessing promised to the *Christian* who obeys it? Is not the law thus put before one of the most spiritual churches of the New Testament as a rule for them to walk by? But, enough of this. Reader, judge for yourself.

And now, my dear Brother, I have finished my truly painful task. I have omitted altogether touching on one point—the flagrant *immoralities* among “the Plymouth Brethren.” My personal knowledge, and information from those among them, supply me with some of the most shocking cases, so shocking that I cannot bring myself to give them publicity. I would prefer to let them pass into oblivion. I would rather throw the mantle of love over them, lest they should cause the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

In conclusion, let me earnestly, but affectionately, warn all Christians, who contemplate joining themselves to this body, to pause. I warn them against the awful heresies among them; against the dangerous tendencies of their principles; against the abyss towards which, I believe, they are rapidly hastening. I solemnly warn all Christians reading their works, before adopting their views, to examine, compare, and weigh them well, with the Word of God. New views are constantly started by them from some distorted passages of God’s Word. They are split up into innumerable parties, each one accusing and condemning the other. Their great aim and strenuous efforts on all sides, are, not to draw sinners from darkness to light, but Christians from other denominations to their own. I now close. If I have said anything personally unkind, I regret it. I have not one particle of unkind feeling in my heart towards

any of them; but I feel it my duty as a minister of Christ to endeavour to put the sheep of Christ on their guard, and to maintain "the truth as it is in Jesus," in opposition to every form of error, whether Rationalism, Tractarianism, Socinianism, Plymouthism, or any other form in which it may present itself.

Believe me, my dear Brother,

Yours most affectionately and sincerely,

FREDERICK WHITFIELD.

*The Parsonage, Kirkby Ravensworth,
near Richmond, Yorkshire.*

November 10th, 1862.