

The Grounds of
The Montreal Division
Reconsidered.

"Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth and teach me; for Thou art the God of my salvation." PSALM 25: 4, 5.

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PART I.—THE ACTION.

Conflicting claims are, it is generally known, made respecting meetings of brethren held respectively at N. H. Hall and Craig Street, Montreal, that each is upon the ground of the One Body; which obviously cannot be true of both. This question has, it is believed, been lately receiving considerable attention, on the part especially of younger brethren and others not long separated, who are but little if at all informed with regard to a past which is, nevertheless, fundamental to their ecclesiastical position. It is in the hope that, through the Lord's blessing, this paper may prove helpful to such saints, that it is written: An Assembly of God is distinguished by certain essential features from a mere company of Christians. As no assemblage of U. S. senators could form the senate, unless convened in accordance with the Constitution of the United States, so no company of saints can compose an Assembly of God, having the Lord Jesus in their midst, with authority to bind and loose in His name, unless gathered according to scripture upon divine ground, in subjection to Him as Lord. The Holy Spirit gathers only to the one divine centre, the Name of the Lord, that is the truth of His person and work, held in separation from doctrinal and moral evil; which involves the maintenance of true, scriptural discipline in each local

assembly, and so in the whole circle of practical fellowship. The "within" and the "without" are everywhere the same; for there is but the one Spirit forming the one body. To depart from this divine order and form a separate meeting involves the grievous, Christ-dishonoring sin of schism; and such a meeting in no wise stands in the position, or possesses the privileges and authority attaching to the Assembly of God. No matter how close an imitation it may be it is a sect, formed in the energy of the flesh and man's will, in disobedience. To avoid being ensnared into having part in this wounding the Lord Jesus afresh in the house of His friends, calls for a subject heart and ear, with much godly self-distrustful care. According to the teaching of scripture an Assembly of God (that is a local meeting having that status before the Lord) must first have forfeited its divine position on earth, with attendant privileges, before it can be replaced by the formation of another. It is not questioned that N. H. H. was such an assembly prior to certain unhappy proceedings in 1884; and it devolved upon those who set up the new meeting, begun in Craig Street, to demonstrate from scripture to the satisfaction of the consciences of their many troubled brethren that it had lost its divine position and character. The lines upon which they and their co-adjutors have sought to do this will be evidenced by certain extracts from pamphlets issued in defense of the course pursued by Mr. Grant and his supporters, which it is intended to bring forward below.

The point of actual schism or division was reached when there were found two separate, and in a sense opposed, companies breaking bread, each claiming to form or possess *the Lord's Table*. This expression is not one of man's forming, but is used in scripture by the Holy

Spirit. In the divine mind practical obedience is inseparably connected with Christ's title of Lordship. Thus He solemnly and affectingly inquires "Why call ye Me Lord! Lord! and *do not* the things which I say?" Again, it is not expressed as "*the Saviour's death*" which we show, but "*the Lord's death*," till He come. Where His will is denied and His authority is refused, there He is not Lord; so that a table spread in self will and disobedience cannot be the Lord's table. Since His mind and will are but *one*, there cannot be in the sense of divergence and opposition *two* Lord's tables; otherwise He would be the author of confusion. The example of Israel is conclusive that God sanctions and owns but one centre for His people, the place of *His* choice, "to set His name there"; to the utter exclusion of man's will. In connection with that centre He will have the worship and service of a *united* people; for such is His goodness. The divisive work of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, "who made Israel to sin," is fraught with solemn warning with regard to such presumptuous sin. The language of the Lord's deeply touching prayer in John xvii shows how He desires the oneness of His own that are in the world kept, and thus manifested to the world (verse 21); as the way of responsive affection towards Himself is seen in Chap. xiv: 23. The restoration, in these closing days, of the one ground of loyalty and obedience to the Lord Jesus is a touching expression of His faithful, unchanging love. What has occurred is as though, in a mutinous army, some soldiers, in revived affection for their honored and beloved leader, returned to their allegiance; and so were obediently found *together* on the parade ground at the appointed time and in the prescribed order. *One company* only they would necessarily form (however

motley and contemptible in the eyes of their fellows) *because one and all meeting on the one, alone ground of obedience.* So, in regard to the Assembly of God, there is such a ground, and all meeting on it must necessarily form not separate and independent companies, but *one*.

The course pursued by the many at N. H. H., however reprehensible, terminated in a disciplinary act by which an individual saint only was excluded; and so stopped short of division. Did this render necessary the setting up of another meeting? Then they were, nevertheless, guilty of schism. Mr. S. Ridout, in his pamphlet entitled *The Montreal Division and Craig Street* (page 7) expresses himself as follows:

"The action of breaking bread (at Craig Street) was a natural outcome of a long continued course on the part of the majority;" and on page 23 (foot note) "the table set up at Craig Street was the *result* of the majority in N. H. H. having put away Mr. Grant."

It will be observed, however, that Mr. Ridout does not say the *spiritual* outcome and the *necessary and inevitable* result. Some further words of his, which I shall present shortly, evidence that he could not so speak; because he therein refers to an alternative and, in his judgment, preferable course having been open. It is beyond question that in some cases, through lamentable failure, saints have been unwarrantably excluded by brethren gathered to the Lord's name; but this did not involve the establishment of a rival meeting, save in exceptional cases where the disposition to do so was found, along with the necessary following; for one cannot break bread alone. In one case a brother, who had been wronged in this way, is said to have nevertheless continued to attend the meetings, waiting upon the Lord and his mistaken brethren

until, after the lapse of a year or two, the error was discovered and rectified; no doubt to the joy and blessing of all. Such suffering for well-doing and taking it patiently, in a loving care for the Lord's glory and the peace and welfare of His assembly, would seem likely to lead on to the Lord's gracious commendation in that coming day of manifestation. This does not at all trench upon the ground of the Lord's solemn injunction, that every one that nameth His name should depart from iniquity. On this point the following further language of Mr. Ridout (page 19) may be quoted:

"If the majority at N. H. H. had blasphemed the Person of Our Lord, had denied His atoning work, had allowed the grossest forms of wickedness or anything of this kind no one for a single moment would have thought that secession from the room, on the part of those who stood loyal to Christ was anything but an act of faithfulness to Him."

The point which Mr. Ridout is establishing is that too much may be made of the mere room, which is very true; but, in doing so, he makes the important admission that there was *no such wickedness* on the part of the many at N. H. H.: Had there been so he would surely have said that the setting up of the new table was the *necessary* consequence of their conduct.

Whilst his supporters speak in appreciative terms of the doctrine put forward by Mr. Grant, it is not regarded as being of fundamental importance. Thus Mr. Ridout (claiming to speak authoritatively for Mr. Grant) says, on page 7:

"Most have agreed that, scriptural or unscriptural, they (the doctrines) are not of a character that would call for separation. They do not involve great fundamental truths."

In the judgment of Messrs. Grant and Ridout there was nothing doctrinally at stake that would warrant

separation. This, in effect, accords with the following statements extracted from *Papers Concerning the N. H. H. Division* (Loiseaux Bros.), page 17:

"We come then to the solemn conclusion that the ground you (the many at N. H. H.) have taken in excluding from the Lord's Table a member of the Body of Christ, against whom no charge of ungodliness in walk or doctrine has been proved is schismatic; and obliges us (the many at Plainfield) to regard you as having left the ground of the One Body, on which we are gathered."

And on page 12:

"They had now established a table, really upon new ground, sectarian in character."

Let it be carefully observed what this involves; no less than that *because of their course of action towards Mr. Grant, the Lord Jesus had summarily deprived the many at N. H. H. of their Assembly position, character and authority; abandoning them, as being reduced to a mere assemblage of Christians, meeting (if they should continue to meet) upon their own wills in disobedience and independency.* In this connection let us listen for a moment to the voice of another advocate of Mr. Grant and Craig Street, namely, Mr. Walter Scott, whose pamphlet entitled *The Montreal Division* (second edition) is marked as being obtainable from one of Mr. Grant's prominent supporters in Montreal. Having first expressed his inability to find language in which sufficiently to express his condemnation of the action of the leaders at N. H. H., Mr. Scott continues, on page 5, as follows:

"We are also convinced that however mistaken in action, yet they have been actuated throughout these unhappy proceedings by a real care for what they supposed to be the truth; zeal too for the glory of God and for the best interests of the saints."

According to these passages, cited from the writings of various supporters of Mr. Grant and Craig Street, the many at N. H. H. are exonerated from gross wickedness, such as Mr. Ridout describes (only to exclude it from the case), and from opposing any divine truth of such importance as would warrant separation; but convicted of being guilty of the sin of schism—involving their destruction as an assembly of God—in the course pursued towards Mr. Grant; although Mr. Scott, the last quoted defender—speaking particularly of the leaders, but in terms which seem clearly to apply to the followers also—allows that they were actuated by motives of sincere but misdirected piety. The Lord Jesus had indeed granted to *Thyatira* “space for repentance”; but, in face of the enormity of guilt involved in this well-meant but erroneous disciplinary action in respect of an individual saint, He (so, in effect, it is said) *at once* withdrew His presence and authority, and with it their assembly status; transferring the candlestick to a substituted meeting, where, without the interval of a single Lord's Day, breaking of bread was carried on; the minority by this act declaring the many left behind, probably more than twice their own number, out of fellowship in a mass!

Mr. Ridout indeed on page 21 charges the many with

“A persistent, determined, high-handed purpose to put Mr. Grant out of fellowship at any cost, not excluding the cost of a division.”

Nevertheless there seems room to conclude that, amongst the supporters of Mr. Grant, there are many saints of God, who, in the love that thinketh no evil, will join hands in this regard with Mr. Scott, rather than with Mr. Ridout. To Him who searches the heart and the

reins, motives are infallibly known. Those who lean to and impute evil, where there is room for a more favorable construction, must be prepared to give account therefor at the judgment seat of the One who has solemnly said "judge not"!

Coming now to the question of an alternative course, which might have been adopted instead of there and then forming the new meeting at Craig Street, the following further extract is taken from Mr. Ridout's pamphlet, page 20:

"The second course open to our brethren would have been to cease breaking bread, with a solemn protest against the unrighteousness of the whole course of the majority; and to have appealed to brethren elsewhere to come in and judge between the two portions of the assembly. Those who hope that better results would have been reached in this way, point out that it would have given time for saints elsewhere to appeal to brethren; that it would have manifested that there was no desire to set up a fresh table; and that those who all along had been suffering persecution at the hands of a large and influential majority, still refused to take their vindication into their own hands; but were waiting upon God. I confess to you, as I have freely done to many, and did at the time to our brethren at Craig Street, that I believe this would have been a wiser course."

"Better results!" With the scriptures in heart and mind, and with the presence and power of the indwelling Spirit, uniting us with our Exalted Head in glory, are we then orphans and, without Urim and Thummim, left to our own short-sighted, partial and perhaps wilful reasonings about results; to decide in that way upon a course of action in respect of that wherein the honor of the name of the Lord Jesus and the peace and welfare of His beloved assembly are at stake? Is not his mind still to be apprehended by those who humbly, reverently and with a

single eye seek the knowledge of it where only it is to be found, in the calm of His holy presence, where every motion of flesh and will is stilled? Abram doubtless looked for "better results" when, leaving a divine position, he descended into Egypt; but David inquired of the Lord. Another honored one, in a later day, took a like attitude, in saying "Lord, what *wilt Thou* have me do?" They acted "with prayer," Mr. Ridout tells us, but he does *not* say that they acted in the assured knowledge of the Lord's mind and will, and that He was with them in the momentous action they were taking. How *could* Mr. Ridout have said this when he admits that there was another and a "wiser course" open? Without this assurance how could they venture upon such a perilous undertaking, wherein possibly success might mean the achieving of their Lord's dishonor in the erection of a schismatic monument of their own sin and folly? *Where*, it may be solemnly asked, *was the Lord Jesus in regard to the breaking of bread apart in Craig Street on Dec. 21, 1834?* Is it answered that He was there, in the midst of saints gathered, in subjection to His authority, by the Holy Ghost; and so forming an assembly of God? Then was it not the *only* wise course to be there also in the attitude of obedience? But if *He* judged that the failure of the many at N. H. H. was not of such a character as to involve the forfeiture of their assembly status; if *He at least* lingered in mercy, then the minority *had left Him behind* in leaving their many brethren, and were meeting in Craig Street without Him, upon sectarian ground. Could that be wise? Is it not too sadly evident that in all this *the Lord Himself is left out?* It would have been well doubtless to wait upon brethren at a distance. Their possible intervention was evidently shut out by the

precipitate action of the dissentients, *who could not even wait until the putting away of Mr. Grant, already decided upon, had been carried into effect by being announced in assembly at N. H. H.!* But this impetuosity did more: it excluded godly waiting *on the Lord Jesus*, who, if the many were in the wrong, might yet have granted repentance, so that after all Mr. Grant might not have been put away. It is known that before taking the final step brethren at N. H. H. awaited the reply from the many at Plainfield (for there was dissent there too) to their letter advising the decision reached with regard to Mr. Grant, and seeking their concurrence. In the meantime breaking of bread was precipitately begun at Craig Street.

There is, I believe, divine instruction for us in Leviticus xiv, which has an important bearing upon this very point. There the case of the leprous house is dealt with, and we are permitted to contemplate the slow, successive steps by which it is at length reduced to a mere heap of dishonored refuse. Before, however, this sad end is reached there has been the deliberate, painstaking exercise of priestly discernment, with patient waiting, even for a complete period—seven days. All efforts to eradicate the evil having failed, what remains is no longer a house. If, in the case of a mere dwelling house and under a legal dispensation, such judicial slowness of procedure is inculcated, to what manner of conduct would the Spirit of Christ incite where the rejection and downfall of an assembly of God is in question? Surely to what is far removed from that haste with which the flesh must needs put into effect its evil and harmful impulses!

The haste with which the new meeting at Craig Street was set up, shutting out the possible intervention of the Lord Jesus to avert the dishonor of His name and the

scattering of the flock, has been spoken of as unmistakably evidencing the formation of a party, with a determined party spirit, impelling those who composed it on to a position that completely closed the door to all hope of averting division. For the situation was thus materially and distressingly altered. No longer was it a question of an alleged wrong course of action towards an individual saint, terminating in his exclusion, which evidently admitted of reconsideration and restoration, but now of two actually existent meetings, with two rival tables, each claiming to be the Lord's, the assembly having been rent in twain! The breakdown of an assembly is a serious matter for all composing it, for the assembly is one and we are all jointly responsible for its and for each other's state. In consistency with this divine principle, in its application to Israel, Daniel, personally guiltless, was before the Lord, with his face in the dust, saying, "*We*" have sinned, have committed iniquity, have rebelled, have turned a deaf ear to Thy servants the prophets; and unto "*us*" belongs confusion of face. To what deep brokenness and self-humiliation before the Lord would the Spirit of Christ today incline the hearts of those forming the godly portion of any assembly of God which should break down, to their Lord's and their own shame? Would He lead to such a course as we have been considering in the case of those who met at Craig Street? Surely not!

It is refreshing to turn to the example of beloved, honored, humble-minded J. N. D., who had brought out doctrine touching the sufferings of Christ, which excited alarm and opposition amongst the saints. The *doctrine* he could not withdraw, because assured that it was the truth of God. But he offered to withdraw *himself*, not merely from ministry, but from breaking of bread also;

and to stand apart altogether until confidence should be restored. Our Lord Jesus had said: "I have yet many things to say unto you but ye cannot bear them now" (John xvi); and He did not say them. How delightful to see, in His humble follower the working of His Spirit in tender, self-denying solicitude for the flock, to which he was himself consistently an example.

It will be observed that in this paper the thread upon which the observations have been hung is formed from the writings of some of Mr. Grant's supporters, wherein, as to his being put away and what led up to it, he is viewed as having been in the right and his rejectors in the wrong. Upon premises so laid down, the following conclusions seem to be unavoidable, namely, that

1. Actual division was not consummated until the time when breaking of bread apart at Craig Street began.

2. The action of the many at N. H. H. stopped short of division.

3. Their conduct, although the writer believes it was marked by failure, is not shown to have involved such wickedness as would, according to scripture, cause their abandonment by the Lord Jesus Christ (and with it their extinction) as an assembly of God.

4. Therefore it is not shown to have furnished scriptural grounds for the separative action of those who, in Craig Street, set up a new meeting.

5. Apart from this, Craig Street could not be an assembly of God; but contrariwise a meeting in schism upon man's will.

6. All who have accepted fellowship with it have followed a course of departure from the ground of the One Body.

Such at least are the writer's firm and unwavering con-

victions formed many years ago, and, as he believes, formed in the presence of the Lord.

PART II.—THE DOCTRINE.

In John vii: 17 we have the expression of a momentous truth, which applies to both sinner and saint, viz: that "if anyone desire to practise His will he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is of God." The ability to distinguish truth from error, to take forth the precious from the vile, is thus solemnly declared to *depend upon the state of soul*. Believers in Christ are indeed privileged to have an unction from the Holy One which abides in us and has taught us to abide in Him. (1 John ii: 27-28.) But the practical benefit of the spirit of truth's presence may readily be forfeited by neglecting to so abide. If, for example, true separation, which is from the *principles* as well as from the *associations* of this present evil world, be not vigorously maintained, and self-confidence in some measure be allowed place, shipwreck is imminent. For when, inevitably, difficulties arise partiality or prejudice will color the vision and warp the judgment, and the helm having imperceptibly changed hands, a Christ-dishonoring course will be taken in the energy of the flesh. Error, in the guise of truth, may be zealously embraced and labored for, until possibly the long-cherished illusion is dispelled only at the judgment seat of the One thus wounded afresh in the house of His friends, with the earthly path forever closed. Extensive knowledge of divine truth will not preserve us from this great danger; nor will gift. They may add to our power for mischief. The case of Solomon presents a striking warning. Endowed with exceptional ability and vast stores of knowledge he nevertheless went far in ways of sin and folly.

There is but one safeguard—in lowliness of mind and constant dependence, abiding in Him. May He thus graciously keep us until the end!

To engage in such solemn meditation as the foregoing, sadly calls to mind the deeply humbling spectacle centered among exceptionally privileged saints of God in England; where the enemy, taking advantage of a state of decline, evidenced for years before by wordly-mindedness and self-complacency, leading on to indifference towards our adorable Lord and Saviour, has made use of one F. E. Raven to steal away much precious truth, not long ago divinely restored to us in its pristine fullness. At the bidding of this man the present possession of eternal life and the believer's being actually justified and a son, with other lately prized portions of subjective truth have been renounced; under the delusion of entering upon a more accurate and enlarged understanding of scripture. Shocking and lamentable as this is, it sinks into relative insignificance when put in comparison with his paramount falsehood, which destroys the truth of the Person of Christ, and with it necessarily the atonement. For this man has dared to subject that which reaches up to full Godhead to the profane analysis and vain speculation of a creature's finite mind, with the result that *the Lord's true, full, holy humanity is reduced to mere "human condition;"* and *the union in His inscrutable person of Godhead and manhood is explicitly denied!* As divine truth is relinquished, conscience is degraded. It is therefore more humbling than surprising to observe that amongst saints who, with this false teacher, are professedly gathered to the name of the Holy and True One, there has been concealment of the fact that since the time of the Montreal trouble a terrible division has been caused by this rationalistic assault on

the foundations of Christianity. So that, under color of returning to the ground which Mr. Grant and his supporters left, unwary souls have been led into identification with and joint-responsibility for this monstrous sin.

The time for entering upon an exhaustive consideration of the doctrine set forth in *Life and Sealing with the Spirit* is past; and the writer has no intention to say more than will suffice to evidence its unscriptural character. In submitting for the careful consideration of the readers the following extracts it is suggested that a perusal of the statements along with their context on pages 6, 7, 58 and 57 of Mr. Grant's pamphlet would be preferable.

"The first point of difference concerns our place as Christians in Christ. It is maintained in this paper to be the inseparable accompaniment of eternal life, and his therefore from the first moment of quickening. Forgiveness of sins and justification necessarily attach to this also. . . . The quickened man possesses these things: not is, in the purpose of God, to possess them merely. . . . Scripture links faith in *Christ* with justification. No one could deny that there must be faith in Christ."

Along with the new nature imparted in quickening faith in *God* is necessarily present. "Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth" could otherwise not be affirmed. But it is with faith in *Christ* that forgiveness and justification are divinely connected, as Mr. Grant states. In the past dispensation there was *faith in God* but not *faith in Christ*; for the Son was yet secluded in Deity. May there not today be found faith in *God*, in those who yet are only on their way to *Christ*? Upon the scriptural answer to this question the truth or falsehood of Mr. Grant's doctrine on this point hangs. Mr. Grant allows that justification cannot be apart from faith in *Christ*; and if quickening can be, then his connection of justifica-

tion with quickening *as an invariable, present accompaniment* is false; and consequently his including with it the being in Christ and forgiven is likewise erroneous. Here then we have a distinct issue raised. Does scripture teach that there is an invariable, instantaneous transition—from being dead in sins to being in Christ, forgiven and justified; or does it on the other hand evidence that God has left Himself free to quicken a soul before, and on the way to, trust in Christ?

God has seen fit to leave the beginning of *natural* life enveloped in obscurity. The tender shoot peers above ground and any one may be assured of its existence; but no eye saw the first motion of the life thus revealed. Man reckons the beginning of his own life from the moment of birth; but was all that preceded only death? Is there not a pre-natal condition involving the commencement of life—a condition from which the status of life is rightly withheld? Need we then be surprised if God has been pleased to deal in like manner with the beginning of *spiritual* life, if room be left in scripture for what may conveniently be termed an *underground, vital work of God in the soul*; not yet *life in its recognized status*, but that which is nevertheless foreign to the dead condition of the mere child of Adam?

In connection with this subject some portions of divine truth found in John's writings will come before us; and others, for which space cannot here be found, will doubtless occur to the reader. It may therefore be well to briefly advert to the peculiar characteristic style of this chosen vessel of the Holy Spirit's ministry. It is His way to present things *in their nature*, abstractly and absolutely, without taking account of whatever might tend, practically, to limit or qualify. Thus he brings before us,

in the way of broad distinction and full contrast, the salient features of the divine life, without regard to whatever may, in fact, lie between. Failure on the part of one who is a Christian—being in itself not Christianity but a denial of it—would not in general have place in such a line of instruction. Some of the utterances of our Lord Jesus, recorded in John's gospel, partake of this character. For instance, we have in chap. vi:35 the statement that "he that believeth on Me shall never thirst"; and further, in chap. vii: 38, that "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The Lord is here teaching what a Christian is, what characterizes him. From His language it might be deduced that any one experiencing unsatisfied desire, or being a hindrance and a drag to others, instead of a source of spiritual help and refreshment, is thereby proven not to be a believer on Christ at all. Then again in chap. vi: 53 we have the Lord's deeply affecting statement, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." The disciples, who probably heard these words, did not understand them; and could not then so eat and drink. Who indeed was there that had appropriated a Saviour *who had passed through death and judgment?* Was the Lord *the alone living one* in a scene of universal death? On the contrary, there were the eleven and doubtless other disciples; and in all probability numbers of other quickened souls, within or without the land, still on O. T. ground; Christ not yet having been presented or preached to them. Did the Lord intend to deny the work of God existing in those souls? Surely not! Yet the language is strongly exclusive—"ye have no life in you." We need here to bear in mind the solemn principle indicated in John viii: 43

that it is only as the divine thought is known that the divine utterance can be understood. This excludes man's pride and self sufficiency. The Lord is bringing life and incorruptibility to light. It is life out of death, His own anticipated sacrificial death, and its nature, which He is revealing. When the mighty work of redemption should be accomplished, when "the Lord of life in death had lain," then would it be possible for the disciples and other quickened souls to eat His flesh and drink His blood. When, in the exercise of this determinative function, the life should be evidenced, it would be owned. We know that O. T. saints were born again; nevertheless, in so far as the writer knows, scripture nowhere speaks of them as having had life, which, in its recognized status, awaited as a fitting honor the coming of the Son of God, the revealed object of faith and accomplisher of redemption. We have here then the setting forth of life, characteristically presented, in full contrast with the state of death exemplified in the Jews before the Lord. All that was not thus characterized could only be repudiated as being lifeless externalism, no matter how lofty its pretensions might be. Alongside of this solemnly divisive scripture may be placed a kindred passage from John's Epistle, namely, "he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Again the Spirit of God fixes our attention on the broad distinction between the two fully contrasted classes of the living and the dead. To introduce here *what is merely transitional* would only detract from the force and impressiveness of the Spirit's style. Instruction upon that point belongs to another line of ministry, and must be looked for elsewhere in scripture. The language of scripture designedly admits of other constructions than the true one; and subjection to the

Holy Spirit, whose enlightenment is essential to its true understanding, is thus rendered indispensable, to the exclusion of man's pride and self-sufficiency. The only right interpretation of scripture is to take out of it what God has put into it for us. Apart from a right subjective state of soul the Bible also is a stone of stumbling. May we be kept as Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words! Thus only shall we be kept as a garden enclosed for the Master's use; and He is worthy of this, is He not?

In this chapter (John 6) the Lord publishes the Father's will "that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have eternal life." Almighty power undertakes to overcome the inveterate opposition of man's will in connection with the new birth; for "they shall be all taught of God"—an expression of which the significance may be seen from Isaiah liv:13 and Jeremiah xxxi:33; with which Ezekiel xxxvi:25-27 may be compared. For "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The natural man is incapable of receiving such divine instruction; as is indicated in "it is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me." John 1:13 shows, in a historical way, that only born-again ones so come to the Saviour. It is God's way to conduct souls to Christ through exercise, whether brief or prolonged. Under the felt burden of sins, and encouraged by the beginning of confidence in God, the anxious one is made willing to be saved for nothing.

"Just as I am without one plea,
But that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God I come."

It is thus the hymn aptly depicts this memorable experience. Where there is a going out of the heart towards God, with this beginning of confidence in Him—sin being at the same time hateful—there is already; although imperceptibly, the participation of a new nature in these exercises. The following extract from Mr. Kelly on the Acts seems appropriate here. He is speaking of the dozen or so of souls who, at Ephesus, probably twenty years or more after Pentecost, received the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Apostle Paul.

"It is therefore to be noted how careful scripture is to distinguish between the *early vital work* of the Holy Spirit in awakening souls by the application of the word, and *the subsequent reception of the Spirit, when the gospel is believed*. In the men at Ephesus there was yet no such reception; yet they were born of God; which is never apart from subjection to His word. But it may be apart from the gospel of His grace. Any part of the divine word, one might say generally, is applicable to the quickening of a soul, hardly going beyond what an Old Testament saint experienced."

In 1 Peter i:2 we have brought before us:

1. Sanctification of the Spirit, unto
2. Obedience, and
3. Sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Similarly, in the commission given by the Lord Jesus to His servant, the Apostle Paul, he was sent (Acts xxxvi: 18).

1. To open their eyes, that
2. They may turn to God, that
3. They may receive remission of sins, by faith in Christ Jesus.

Taking the two together we have brought before us the foregoing portions of the word of God:

“It is human consciousness—apprehension—that is all through in question. In this sense, until He had met His father He had not got ‘the best robe.’”

In this lovely parable the Lord Jesus is generally understood to have portrayed a progressive, divine activity in grace towards the individual soul, which is obviously at variance with Mr. Grant's doctrine that the sinner is, by the single act of quickening, then and there placed in Christ, forgiven and justified; all that remains, in these respects, being his entrance into the consciousness of what he thus has in actual possession. It is in meeting this serious difficulty that Mr. Grant commits himself to the statement that human consciousness is what is in question throughout the parable. This makes the repentant one the central object in this teaching of the Lord, which is erroneous; for the true, divine centre is found in the gracious activities and paramount joy of the Father. Properly speaking it is the Parable, not of the Prodigal Son, but of the Father's Welcome. In accordance with this fact, the lesser joy of the received one—which stands connected with human consciousness—is passed by unnoticed; whilst *that which is divine—the Father's supreme incomparable joy*—is strikingly and emphatically published. In the father's running to meet the prodigal, embracing him and bestowing the best robe, the Lord Jesus seems unquestionably to present to our adoring gaze corresponding precious, delightful, divine activities towards the repentant one; which actually occur in the very sequence and order shown. Mr. Grant's answer, already quoted, apparently means that such actions do not, in point of fact, separately and successively occur; but are features of the parable, introduced in this way as aids in depicting the convert's being progressively led into the consciousness

1. The initial act of the Spirit, new birth.
2. The resulting changed attitude towards God.
3. The receiving of part with Christ Jesus, by *faith in Him*.

This entirely accords with the Lord's statement "every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me." Then, again, in Romans viii:30 we have mention of successive links in a golden chain of divine blessing: for "whom He did predestinate

- (1) Them He also called; and whom He called
- (2) Them He also justified; and whom He justified
- (3) Them He also glorified."

The last divine act, although yet future, is spoken of as done, because inseparably linked with, and as absolutely settled and sure as, what precedes: (1). The call is beyond question the effectual, life-giving call of the Spirit which involves the new birth. It is, *as a separate and subsequent divine act*, marked off from predestination which *preceded* (before time began) by the phrase "them He also;" in the same way that being glorified (*in the eternity to come*) is separated and marked off from being justified. Exactly the same divisive and distinguishing phrase comes between the call of the Spirit (involving new birth), and the succeeding divine act of justification. "Whom He called *them* He also justified." Are these acts then *simultaneous*, as Mr. Grant affirms, in saying that justification necessarily attaches to this life; that the quickened man possesses it, not is going on to possess it? Manifestly not, if the word of God is to decide.

With regard to the ex-prodigal's investiture with the best robe Mr. Grant says (*Life and the Spirit*, page 61):

of blessing actually possessed "from the first moment of quickening." This is what Mr. Grant's doctrine calls for, and what seems to be intended in saying that human consciousness is what is in question throughout. Unquestionably past, divine action does form, in its discovery, the basis of present, new human consciousness; but we have here, have we not? *present divine activities meeting at the suited moment, and thus responding to progressive exercise in one quickened some time before.* Evidently when the prodigal "came to himself" with the significant cry "I perish!" turning in hope towards the father for help, that hidden work of God in the soul was wrought. It is not that when, some time afterwards, he reached the father's house he made the surprising discovery that, ever since that turning point in his career, he had been unconsciously wearing the best robe; or found out that it had been secretly inserted into some bundle of scanty belongings which he had brought along with him from the land of famine. The robe was not bestowed there. For this a real and momentous *change of position* must first intervene. Apart from this his changed consciousness had been but a dream, vain and mocking as the desert mirage. Similarly the one who has repented towards God—that is believed God's testimony concerning *himself*, goes on to believe God's testimony concerning *His Son*, which is saving faith; and thus passes, (not apart from exercise surely) into a new position before God and is found in Christ Jesus, in the fitting dignity of sonship. Exercise and actions are alike progressive in our parable. It was not the commencement, but the conclusion of the long, toilsome journey which furnished the occasion for the father's gracious reception, which doubtless encouraged the repentant one to proceed to his confession. This in

its turn evoked the command to the servants to "bring forth the best robe and put it on him." That the Father's joy overflows in respect of *each individual repentant sinner* is confirmed, in the immediate context, by the statement that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one* sinner that repenteth." The exercise so touchingly depicted in the case of the prodigal is distinctly an individual thing. Why then cannot the precious activities of the Happy God (1 Tim. i: 11), indicated in the father's running to meet, embracing and robing the repentant one, be accepted as having their delightful exercise towards each individual believer? In thus, in effect, changing the centre of the Lord's teaching in this lovely portrayal of grace, putting man there instead of God. Mr. Grant, if he does not altogether expunge these divine activities, certainly belittles that to which the Lord has assigned the chief place. In so doing has not Mr. Grant (unconsciously, doubtless,) bent scripture to meet the exigencies of his system of doctrine? To the writer it seems only too painfully evident that he has.

It is as essential to the maintenance of the divine holiness and majesty, as it is to the purifying of the sinner's conscience, that confession should *precede* forgiveness and justification. This divine order is shown in the assurance that "if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But where, in Mr. Grant's doctrine, is there room for such confession, preceding forgiveness? *Before* "the first moment of quickening"? Then is it the dead work of one without faith, who, strange to say, nevertheless pleases God; for surely "I have sinned" is grateful to the inclined ear of the Saviour-God! *After* "the first moment of quickening"? Then, according to Mr. Grant, we have

the strange spectacle of one who is already in Christ, forgiven and justified, now, for the first time, confessing his sins and sinnership! One horn of the dilemma affords no more relief to Mr. Grant than the other. Error cannot be made to fit in with the truth; because it is not of it (1 John ii:21).

The application of Mr. Grant's doctrine to the case of Cornelius is fraught with serious, indeed insurmountable difficulties. According to this teaching it is true of the believer, from the first moment of quickening, that he is in Christ, forgiven and justified. This connection applies, says Mr. Grant, from the time of the death and resurrection of Christ. It is some time after those momentous events, probably several years after, that Cornelius comes before us in scripture, as a quickened soul (Acts x:31). Prior to Peter's mission he was (Mr. Grant tells us) already in Christ, forgiven and justified; for this stands divinely connected, since the resurrection, with the quickened state. But according to scripture Cornelius was, notwithstanding, still *unsaved* (Acts xi:14)! Scripture, unlike Mr. Grant, connects being in Christ, not with quickening, but *with trust in Him as the revealed Object of faith*. It refers to the new position before God, upon which He has entered in the title of accomplished redemption—a position upon which we enter by the faith which is *in Him*. There we are as clear of condemnation as He is, who bore it all for us.

With regard to what the Old Testament saints had, the silence of scripture is both significant and impressive; and doubtless embodies for us the wisdom of God in this respect. Why should human reasoning essay to pass this barrier of divine reserve? The Lord Jesus says that "this is life eternal, that they might know Thee (the

Father) and Jesus Christ *whom Thou hast sent.*" Not the Eternal Son, secluded in Deity in past ages; but the *Sent One* of the Father. Evidently this language brings before us, as existent facts, incarnation and the divine manifestation of grace. It is in face of this divine definition that Mr. Grant applies (as scripture does not) the term "eternal life" to those who, in the dim light of a partial revelation, during preceding ages, had to do with *Jehovah*, when the knowledge of the Father and the Son, the sent One who declared His Name, was impossible. It is not a question of whether the Old Testament saints were born again, or would be allowed to perish; but of following, in such an important matter, the example of the Holy Spirit. Outside of such a reverent and humble, if obscure pathway there is a wide field for speculation and inference, theory and dogmatism, variance and strife, separation and sorrow, with, in the background, a suffering of loss in the day of manifestation and reward.

As to Old Testament saints having had life "in the Son," Mr. Grant, in *Life and the Spirit*, page 10, teaches as follows:

"That they may all be one as Thou Father art in me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." This (says Mr. Grant) is a direct and conclusive statement. It warrants, nay necessitates, our saying that as the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father; so are we in the Father and in the Son." (and further, on page 11) "Community of life and nature, realized in dependence, and manifested in community of word and work. This is what the terms we have been looking at imply. They are the Lord's own words, moreover, as we have seen, which affirm their similar meaning, when applied to Himself and the Father, or to His people in the Son and in the Father; 'as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they may be one in us.'"

The comment made by Mr. Grant in the second part of the foregoing extract places beyond question his meaning in the first part; namely, that there is *the same community* of life and nature between believers and the Lord Jesus, on the one hand, as exists on the other hand between Himself and the Father. "A community of life and nature, realized in dependence," as Mr. Grant expresses it. It might have been thought that the knowledge of *the divine glory* of the Son of God, as one with the Father, would have preserved Mr. Grant from the assumption that our being in Him is a parallel truth with His being in the Father, *with whom He is linked in the one-ness of absolute Deity*, in which no creature can ever have part. *Is this one-ness realized by the Son in dependence?* Are we one with the Father and the Son in having part in the intrinsic, essential life of Godhead? What strange disparagement and dishonor of Our Lord Jesus Christ have we here! What stress Mr. Grant must have been under, in the effort to uphold his system of doctrine, not to perceive that his anchor had dragged, and that his bark had drifted away from the truth of God, when he was committed to such folly and confusion as we have been considering! "In the Son" truly expresses community of life and nature, as Mr. Grant affirms; but it is on our part one-ness with Him *as the Risen Man, the corn of wheat which, having died, no longer abides alone*. For God and for faith the flesh has been judicially terminated at the cross. Until this was accomplished, and the Lord had, through death and judgment, entered upon his full, mediatorial place, none could have life "in the Son." Life *from* the Son they might have; for the Son is God; but that is another matter. It is in such wise that the Holy Spirit speaks of life in the Son; for, as the close context in

John's Epistle shows it is "in His Son *Jesus Christ.*" The passage which Mr. Grant quotes from John xvii. refers, it is believed, to the unity of the Spirit; and will not bear the construction which Mr. Grant has put upon it.

His further statement (page 13) that

"The saints of old . . . were one and all of them quickened by the Son *with the life in Him.*"

(the italics are the writer's, not Mr. Grant's) must, therefore, on the above-stated grounds, be refused, as being unscriptural. *To place saints, in this respect, on the same plane with the Eternal Son, who was ever God and with God, is obviously gross error, to say the least.*

It does not seem desirable to prolong this paper in order to further enter upon the consideration of Mr. Grant's teaching as to sealing with the Spirit. It cannot be disputed that the scriptural order is water, blood, oil—that is, new birth, faith in Christ, sealing with the Spirit; or that the normal condition of one so sealed is that he has the intelligence and joy of his place in Christ; and is in the liberty of sonship. There has been some confused teaching as to this, doubtless; and some statements which Mr. Grant quotes from others, cannot be accepted by the writer. Such teaching, however, neither formed part of a new system of doctrine, nor produced distress amongst the saints. Had it done so there is no reason to think that godly protest would have been refused. It furnished one instance among many in which the very necessary principle of "let the others judge" applies. As regards the time of sealing, God seems in scripture to have left His hands free; and as the inspired record shows that in the early days of the church there was in certain cases an interval; it would seem wise and reverent to leave room for His

administrative ways in this respect to-day, seeing that He is still sovereign.

PART III.—CONCLUDING REMARKS.

Enough has, it is believed, been said to evidence a serious departure from the teaching of scripture in Mr. Grant's system of doctrine. Who, that is free from bias of mind, will say that what he advanced was the truth of God; and that of such great value and importance that he did well to despise remonstrance and nail his colors to the mast in its maintenance? Be it remembered that it was not for *holding* these views that Mr. Grant was put away. Saints were indeed deeply concerned, and not without just grounds, that a teacher of his gift and standing should hold such views. But the clash came through his persistency in *teaching* them, regardless of godly remonstrance; and forming a party around himself, in so doing. Heresy is one of the works of the flesh (Gala. v:20); and with these the assembly is both competent and, in certain cases, responsible to deal. As to any matter concerning his private walk and morals Mr. Grant was amenable to the disciplinary action of his home assembly; but, as he went from assembly to assembly as a teacher, he was *as such* liable to discipline wherever found. By entering his defence at Montreal Mr. Grant seemed to admit the authority of the tribunal; and the writer is not aware of anything showing that, if the judgment had been unanimous, he would have refused it. With regard to unanimity, it is obvious that where any one was beyond question guilty there might be in the assembly those who were under his influence and in sympathy. This would add to the difficulty of the situation; and should cast the loyal ones very much on the Lord; but it will not, I think, be

claimed *that disciplinary action would be thereby barred!* At Corinth the excommunication of the offender was the act of the many (2 Cor. ii:6).

In submitting the foregoing considerations to the judgment of godly brethren, with whom the voice of scripture is final, the writer desires to further state that he has from the first continued to regard the conduct of the many at N. H. H., in some respects, with regret. There were, he believes, mistakes made; but they are such as arose from a state of weakness which is unhappily not rare amongst us in these closing days—a state of weakness in which he has too full a part to have much to say about it. At the same time his judgment has never wavered, that, *in circumstances of extreme difficulty*, they stood loyally and devotedly for the truth of God and the honor of their (and our) Lord, and for the welfare of His beloved assembly. Also that the setting up of the new table at Craig Street, however well-intended, was a schismatic act; and that, consequently, all who have endorsed and accepted it have forsaken the ground of the One Body; and taken a sectarian position. The lapse of time, and the departure to be with the Lord of leaders on both sides, seeming to be favorable to a calm and impartial reconsideration of the facts of the case, this paper is sent forth in the hope that the Lord may graciously command His blessing to rest upon it, to the help of some of His own that are in the world, whom He loves “unto the end.” A. G.