# The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, Volume 1 (Ecclesiastical 1)

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## Considerations Addressed To The Archbishop Of Dublin

And The Clergy Who Signed The Petition To The House Of Commons For Protection1 [The following paper, printed now more than eight-and-thirty years ago, speaks for itself. It was sent privately to the Archbishop and Clergy, having been written some time before it was printed, and withheld, from anxiety as to the justness of the step; the course of the Archbishop and Clergy, with which I had from circumstances nothing personally to do, having greatly tried my spirit, and I was about twenty-six years old at the utmost, when it was written. I may mention that just at that time the Roman Catholics were becoming Protestants at the rate of 600 to 800 a week. The Archbishop (Magee) imposed, within the limits of his jurisdiction, the oaths of allegiance and supremacy; and the work everywhere instantly ceased. I remember Mr. R. Daly, since a prelate of the Establishment, saying to me after receiving it, You ought to become a Dissenter. I said, No; you have got into the wrong, and you want to put me there—but that you will not do. I attach no importance to the paper, which I have never read since, but as the first germing of truth which has since developed itself in the Church of God. It is published therefore just as it was first printed. All the actors are passed, everything is changed, so that there is no indiscretion in publishing it now.]

My Lord and Brethren,

I submit to you the following thoughts, occasioned originally by the Metropolitan Charge and Clerical Petition; but suppressed hitherto, from anxiety to take

no step which I could not maturely judge to be taken according to the will of God. I do not publish them, because my object was to bring before the minds of those concerned the view which pressed upon my own, and by no means to make the world a judge of the conduct of Christ's ministers, which it is not, unless they err from their principles; and if they do, it would be my part, while I might state my mind to them, to cover the. fault as it regards the world, where I supposed there was a fault committed. This feeling has guided my conduct on the occasion, and I cannot but feel happy at the delay, as it has given the opportunity of bringing forward some other things, which will, I think, assist in determining the true character of the views from which they originate. If there should be anything harsh in the expression, I beseech your forgiveness, and that you will attribute it to the anxiety of a mind actuated only by the desire that the conduct of those he loves and looks up to should be free, even from the imputation of error. I send it to the Archbishop, not presumptuously, but with the respect due to his station and office, and with the earnest trust he will weigh the matter fully: and I send it to the Clergy, because, by their petition they seem to have recognised and taken advantage of the supposed support claimed in the Charge; and I earnestly commend it to their attention, not suggesting any particular thing (which I do not feel to be my part), but calling their minds to weigh the place they stand in themselves.

I have long felt deeply anxious on the subject, and it seems to me that a sincere and deep interest in the work of the Spirit of God which is going on in this country, and a consciousness that (while the Spirit of God distributes to every man severally as He will, and my

prayers are offered up that He may do so freely and abundantly) the ministers of the Established Church have many of them been partakers of His energies, and acted in the furtherance of them, call for an inquiry into the principles contained in this Charge. No man whose mind has been informed on these subjects can doubt (and least of all those to whom I address myself, who have themselves borne witness to it by their heartfelt interest in its progress; nay, the world, which can know nothing of the real work, has been compelled to own in its effects) the manifestation of the power of the Divine Spirit which has begun a work in this country, which I fully hope will not end in it, and is of ho country, but of the power of that kingdom which shall fill the whole earth. Under these circumstances all who enter into the work of God, as ministers in the power of the same Spirit, are urgently called upon to recognise their just place, to consider, as far at least as their own conduct is concerned, what the order of the operation is, that they may follow in simplicity, and unhindered by any inconsistency of personal or assumed character, the guidance and workings of the Eternal Spirit. They are bound to hold themselves (I speak this not as urging a claim, but expressing the assumed conviction of their own minds) as servants of Jesus Christ, and who therefore cannot consistently yet please men. They will feel it their faithful and zealous concern, therefore, as far as in them lies, in order that they may be the servants of all men to their eternal welfare, to be free from all men, not to be “the servants of men” as in the world, that they may minister, preaching not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and themselves the servants of such as have ears to hear for His sake. With this view they are called (I do humbly suggest to them) to owe no

man anything; called therefore with jealousy to judge, authorised by their obligation to their one Master who has an undivided claim to their service, anything that would prejudice that claim and the consistency of their own conduct with the blessed work which in His grace He has committed them to do: and I do persuade myself, that they have too deep an interest in the work and reign of Him who redeemed them, not to consider with attention any suggestion which reaches them relative to the interests of His name, and the free course of His word to souls. These considerations weigh with me to induce the communication of the following thoughts. The Charge and Petition appear to the public, with the sanction of their names; and bound as I must be to suppose, that this must carry to the world a representation of their sentiments, which they might find difficulty in gainsaying, I am emboldened to bring these documents under the maturer consideration of those who are disposed to avow, however humbly as individuals yet openly as servants, their identification with the interests of the Son of God, who loved them and gave Himself for them. I do feel, if they assume such an office and character, they are bound to approve themselves in it throughout, in that world where they must have every motive and all their conduct canvassed, and where the honour of their Master's name, the name of the Lord, who gave Himself for the church, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, will be charged in their persons, with every even error of theirs, while they will be used as proofs against them, that they cannot be the ministers of God, seeing they are in such and such things contrary to the character imprinted on the ministry by their Master, and thus their ministry

hindered as towards those who might receive it, and who, in fact for the most part, judge by such very means. I am indeed persuaded that it has pleased God too decidedly (and I have entire faith in the continuance of it) to manifest His power to shew forth the character of those who are His, to suffer the work itself to be countervailed by any particular act, though inconsistent. But I am equally persuaded that this work will be carried on by the maintenance of that same sincerity of service, ministering the truth in love, which the Lord has ever used for its promotion, and that those who look for a part in the heavenly work, who look to be owned as labourers with Him in that day, so that he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together, must look for it in the consistency of their own labour with the spirit and judgment and actual work of Him with whom they seek to rejoice. Impossible that they can gather the fruit of His blessed suffering and divine labour, so as to be glorified with Him by the display of it as the fruit of the travail of His soul, but as His labourers as working in conformity with the spirit in which He wrought. I turn from this, which I speak as the undoubted sentiment of those who are engaged in the work and labour of love, to consider the consistency of certain views and acts with these acknowledged principles; if they be acknowledged, they are unquestionably paramount to all motives, and we are able and bound to judge all acts by them, so as to regulate our own conduct with certainty before God: itself a matter of solid comfort to those who find their exercise in proving what the good and acceptable and perfect will of God is. And surely it does become those who, under the influence of the sense of God’s mercies of which they have been made partakers, are disposed to present their bodies a living sacrifice,

and not to be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of their minds, if in anything they may have seemed to have acquiesced in conformity to that which crucified the Lord of glory, to let judgment have its free course in their own minds, lest they be further entangled in error, lest the clearness and decision of their moral judgment, on which under God their efficient service, to say the least, in the work of God so much depends, should be impaired.

To apply myself then to that which has given occasion to the expression of these thoughts. We have the following public acts—a Charge from the Metropolitan, stating the ground on which the Church stands, and then Petitions forwarded by the instrumentality of the hierarchy, seeking the exercise of civil authority for the protection of that Church as a body in this country. To these I beg attention. It is to be remarked that the Charge is stated to be published at the request of the Clergy, and the Petition is signed by a numerous body of them to say the least, and ostensibly is the act of them as a body interested in the cause of true religion in this country. As there are, thank God! many in the orders of the Church of Ireland who are zealous ministers of divine truth, and as they might seem included in the above general body, it is to them particularly that I address myself. I am not going to discuss the merits of the Archbishop's Charge at all. I purposely decline it. My business is with the principles contained and expounded in it. It amounts to a claim on behalf of the Established Church to protection from the civil Sovereign, founded on these two positions—that the civil Sovereign is bound and has accordingly the right to choose the best religion for his people, and that the Established Church has every

character on which such a choice ought to depend; but, in doing this, the Charge gives a statement of the foundation, nature, and office of the Church, in the principles of which no clergyman zealous in his office as a minister of the Church of Christ, could, I submit, acquiesce.

What is the Church of Christ in its purpose and perfection? And our Lord has taught us to ascribe whatever is inconsistent with this to the hand of an enemy. It is a congregation of souls redeemed out of 'this naughty world' by God manifest in the flesh, a people purified to Himself by Christ, purified in the heart by faith, knit together, by the bond of this common faith in Him, to Him their Head sitting at the right hand of the Father, having consequently their conversation (commonwealth) in heaven, from whence they look for the Saviour, the Lord of glory; Phil. 3:20. As a body, therefore, they belong to heaven; there is their portion in the restitution of all things, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. On earth they are, as a people, necessarily subordinate; they are nothing and nobody; their King is in heaven, their interests and constitution heavenly. "My kingdom is not of this world: if it were, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." As such, consequently, they have no power. The result is, that they are formed into a spiritual community; they are raised, by their Head and centre and source of hope and object of allegiance being in heaven, to be heavenly. They are delivered in spirit out of this present evil world, and become heavenly, spiritual, in their connections, interests, thoughts, and prospects; while their habits on earth are those, by necessary

consequence, of pilgrims and strangers, adorning (by consistent humility, gentleness, patience, and kindness) the grace of which they have been made partakers, through faith which works by love, while they avow and are in their own persons witnesses of the divine dominion. Their personal and common delights are correspondent, and their activities flow from this spring and have their motive and their order in the interests of this kingdom of divine love and grace.

What is the Papacy? Satan's fiction to answer to all this. While men are kept down in the lowest desires of a depraved world, in the bondage of the corrupt affections of a nature alienated from the gift of God, it presents a head on earth, earthly in his interests and in his objects, knitting together in a body, not a people separated out of the world to spiritual objects, but one tied by the closest interests to maintain his earthly supremacy, and with it their own importance upon earth, and in an earthly way; and by this universal and astonishing scheme of antichristianity, which is antitheism, precluding the application of the divine word, the instrument of divine sovereignty, to the souls of men. In short, the system of Popery I look upon as an entire counterpart of the Christian scheme, set up by Satan on the decay of faith to hold its place, uniting men to an earthly head and to each other by those interests from which Christianity delivers, and keeping the world in bondage, instead of leading men to heavenly things out of those interests, to be humbled in the presence of the world's dominion. The members of the papal system will accordingly be found, in their interests, objects, and activities, such as would result from such a system. We know, blessed be God! that, in result, the kingdom of His Son will be glorified in

the splendour of its great Head, and the destruction of that antichristian counterpart, by which Satan has deceived the nations under the pretence of Christianity.

Further, what is the ministry of the Church of Christ? They are as ambassadors in Christ's stead, beseeching men to be reconciled to God, and ministering that grace and truth of which the fulness is in Him, according to the wisdom given unto them, gathering that very congregation of souls of which I have spoken, and edifying them when gathered. They are even in the language of an office, which, in its main purport, looked to all being outwardly, at least, within its own cure, "on the one hand, to teach, premonish, to feed, and provide for the Lord's family; on the other, to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for His children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they might be saved through Christ for ever." Their ministry is coextensive with their Master's grace; their testimony with His claim of dominion over the souls of men. I am not now speaking of the order of its exercise, as between two or more working within their own rule; but as regards the nature of the duty of all, the place which they all occupy as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God, there is a solemn obligation on them as ministers of Christ; and if there be anything in their present position, or the exigency of the season, which would imprint a special, I do not say an exclusive character, on their office, it is the renewed manifestation of the gospel of Him, whose Spirit and word have commission to the ends of the earth. This, while it constitutes their office, constitutes their obligation, gives a decided, formal principle of action, more or less developed, according to the measure of faith. In the

execution of this office of ministering the word of grace and truth, they are met by the great system which Satan has raised to blind men's hearts, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them. They, therefore, find themselves in collision with the Papacy, as a system of darkness, in collision with its influence on the souls of men; and it becomes their business in consequence to contend against its delusion, and expose the artifices of Satan, by which souls are kept from coming to God by Jesus Christ; and in this they are the ministers of Christ, working in His spiritual strength to the fulfilment of the purposes of His grace. What then does this Charge propose as the position of the Clergy? It views the Papacy, in its practical operation, exercising that intruding spirit, and proposing that claim, however modified or concealed for the sake of expediency, which necessarily flows from the character which it assumes as holding the authority of Christ, the Pope gerere personam Christi (seeking to impersonate Christ), while it is altogether earthly, and I cannot avoid saying, the instrument and plan of Satan, exercising dominion here by his delusions—here, the only place where by his delusions he can, under a false name, wear the robe of authority, which he once openly exercised in the plenitude of heathen mythology. It views the Papacy, I say, making inroads by this power in its earthly shape, and calling by seducing arts the kingdom which has been delivered from its direct authority, again to give his power to it. It views it in its results as affecting the State as proposing a dominion inconsistent with the supremacy of the civil Sovereign. To what does it lead the Clergy thereupon? It holds them up to public view in their relation to the State, as formed upon principles

which make them useful to the State, subservient to its purposes, in resisting subjection to this renewed satanic dominion over the world. If counselling the State, this might be all well; if it were a speech in parliament, it might have its place; on temporal, grounds its arguments might be strong, why the State should uphold the interests of the Established Church. With this I have nothing to do. It presents itself as specifically calling on the Clergy to recognise their own due position. It is on this ground I enter on the consideration of it. And what place does it give them? The result of the whole is this—they are harmonised with the State and subservient to its supremacy for the effectuation of its. moral government in order to the happiness of the subject people; and it is its adequacy to this, as being loyal, social, Protestant, etc., which is proposed as its claim on the Sovereign for his support, while it is (being thus embodied with the State) harmless, as not affecting any independent authority. In result, in order to its claim of support, it must be subservient to the interests of the civil Sovereign, its movements and conduct' must fee governed by the interests of the Sovereign to this extent; in a word, the Clergy in their office become "instituted orders of the State," and the ecclesiastical supremacy is made to consist;, not only in the Sovereign's duty, and therefore right, to choose what he deems a true religion for his people, and thereon be a judge of faith so far, but further, in having the ordering of the ministration under his control, and being the head of discipline. In one sense the former part of this may be true, but, on the principles of the Charge, is a mere substitution of the civil Sovereign for the Pope, such as Henry VIII introduced, and which made the German Protestants refuse to ally themselves with him. And in

truth he is an illustration of the words of the Charge; he threw off the supremacy of the Pope in the assertion of his own supremacy as Sovereign, and chose what he deemed to be a true religion for his people.

I quote one passage: “The Sovereign cannot prescribe in favour of a system that maintains a spiritual supremacy independent of civil government,” pp. 29, 30. There is a spiritual supremacy independent of civil government, the spiritual supremacy of Christ, of which the Clergy are ministers —not an earthly dominion, but the very contrary. But when our Lord was brought before Pilate and charged with being a king, He did not affirm the harmlessness of His religion, by stating its amalgamation of interests with the State, or that it was merely “another aspect of the same body,” but unqualifiedly assented to the position, “witnessed a good confession,” that it was a kingdom, but not of this world.

The statement of the Charge is in plain hostility to the view and judgment of our Lord, when Satan was endeavouring to bring Him into jeopardy by the very imputation.2 But the Scripture is as plain as possible; it presents God claiming in the Person of the Son the homage of spiritual faith. So that, “he that believeth not should be damned,” for he rejects divine authority claiming obedience to the faith. It presents civil Sovereigns instituted for the purpose of controlling outward evil, to use its own words, “for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well”—so that they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation, for they resist the same divine authority. And thus viewed, there is no possibility of collision; for the ministers who claim obedience to the faith from all nations are the ministers of the same authority, and

whose business is the claim of subjection to that authority from which the other flows. Neither God, I speak with reverence, nor His Spirit in His ministers, is divided against Himself, and he who denies the authority of the Sovereign in the things which belong to Caesar cannot be speaking by the Spirit of that God who gave the Sovereign that authority, or He would be divided against Himself. The truth is, the apprehension of the heavenly kingdom perfectly clears the whole matter—it has no right place in the world but tribulation and trial, or its casual rest is of the supreme mercy.

But to give up the rightful dominion of the Son of God, in order to avoid the imputation of seeking civil power, or rather to preserve ourselves from the inroads of one who seeks it on apostate grounds, is surely inconsistent, I do not mean in intention but in fact, with fidelity to the glory of the great Head of the Church, humbled for our sakes, and resulting (where taken as a principle of conduct) either in opposition, however mitigated or modified, or at least in the dread of the spiritual energies by which that kingdom of eternal blessing is maintained and promoted. Does not the system of Christian faith “assume the inherent right to establish itself in every country? “Is it not, by authority more than human, “essentially supreme in spiritual matters over all? “Are not both “prince and people bound to submit to its mandates, as to the great Head of the Christian Church?” And are not “they who refuse to do so rebels against a rightful sovereignty?” Are not all in truth and reality the subjects of its sway, whether they will acknowledge it or not? And am I, because Satan has imitated this in an apostate earthly dominion carried on under its name, to give this up (could Satan wish

better?) and to dwindle Christianity into a system harmonised with a particular community, for the purposes of its moral happiness? Is not the great authority of Christian faith as much relinquished by this as by anything else? It is surely, for this is the result— a strange way of opposing Satan's wiles, to give up the claim and possession by which alone he can be overcome. The apostate dominion of the Papacy is not to be met therefore on the part of the Clergy, by calling the aid of the State to resist its temporal dominion, but by their overcoming the strong man armed as the active, forward ministers of Him who is stronger than he; not by waiting till they are attacked, as if their interests were the thing in question; but now that God has been pleased to shed3 forth His Spirit, in their due places ministering the spiritual sword, by which they are called upon to deliver poor fellow-sinners from thraldom, going, and actively opening men's eyes, and turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the remission of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in the Lord of glory. If this be not the place of the Clergy, what place have they? If they are not bound to establish Christianity wherever the Lord opens a door, what are they for? Or, are we to rest in that position which Dean Tillotson, on reflection, wept over, "that no man has a right to establish Christianity in any country, without the consent of the civil government, except he had miracles to support him?" This, I really think to be the genuine result of the principles of the Charge, and indeed to flow from the right of a Sovereign to choose the religion he deems best, in the sense the Charge gives it: in one sense I have said it is his duty. My meaning is this—where the divine authority promulgates

the faith of Christ, i.e., reveals the Son of God, a submission to Him is an obligation resulting as necessarily as that of obedience to God generally revealed, and the Monarch, or civil Sovereign, is as much bound to recognise it as the dominion of God Himself; and thus, if this be called a duty to choose a religion, he certainly has his choice, being founded on a proposal of obedience to faith in God, similar to that on which the salvation of an individual depends; but all this is a consistent assertion of the dominion of Christ, not an escape from it. But I have said, that the placing the Church in this relinquishment of the high calling of God does practically tend to stop its active exertions; indeed, it has no pretence for it else. They may be ministers of moral order, as they have been too often degraded to; but their active, zealous exertions, as Christian ministers, would be intolerable, if Christ had not committed such a ministry to them. It is true, it is brought to soul as an offer of grace, because God is not only supreme, but supreme love; but while they, in their conduct, neither against the law of the Jews, nor the temple, nor yet against Caesar, offend anything at all, they bear a direct authoritative message from God, to every one who has a conscience by which he is subject to God. They may, in consequence, be brought to suffer from those who reject their Master, and the divine authority; they may shew their innocence when called to answer thereupon as troublers of the common peace; but this done, their proper vindication is, when He shall appear for whose name they have suffered: here they appear but as doing well and suffering for it.

But what is the result of such a position as to the Clergy? They confine themselves within the bounds of

social order whose interests they support. They protest against the encroachments of the adverse powers, which would upset the system to which they are attached, and themselves along with it, if it had its way; but there they stop. They cannot honestly attack Satan's kingdom; for to do that, and then cry out because they are abused by his agents, seems to me unworthy conduct, inconsistent with the honour of, and their integrity to, Him (an integrity manifested by conformity flowing from the influence of His Spirit) who was hated, persecuted, spoken all manner of evil against, for the very same reason. It may be the interest of a body who are maintaining worldly order to keep up their worldly credit, in order to that general influence which will cement society, and which is exactly the office which the Charge proposes to the Clergy. But, with this in view, it is manifest they must let Satan alone; for do they expect to attack him, and him to hold his tongue, and leave them in credit, if he can help it, and suffer the prey to be snatched out of his hands? It is therefore expressly the business of a minister of God the Saviour to approve himself such, in honour and dishonour, evil report and good report, whether Christ, or they, for His sake, be blasphemed on the enemy's part, or on the believer's part be glorified; and it seems to be a direct flight from following Christ in this, to claim a refuge from the persecution and dishonour which attend His name; and this is the result (O consider it! brethren) of attaching yourselves to a system, to which worldly credit is necessary, in order to maintain its influence, or whose members at least identify themselves with the honour and security of the world. A civil Sovereign may indeed afford a refuge in such a case, but it can be only by the desertion of that reproach which will ever attend the

name of Christ when it is brought into the trial of the enemy. I cast no reproach on those who look for it, who do not (let me be forgiven for so speaking) see it with the eye of faith: ill would it become me, and most far from my feeling to do so. I only entreat those who believe, who in principle do judge with me, who esteem the reproach of Christ, who look to the ministry of His kingdom, and speak the words of His blessed grace, or those who may be willing to weigh them, to weigh these things. I write for them. I have, I trust under the guidance of the Spirit, discussed these principles merely as they affect their conduct; but I say, it does suppose (I mean, recourse to the civil Sovereign for protection as a body; for remonstrance against the unjust exercise of the magistratorial power is another thing), that they confine themselves to a ministry of moral order, which will be found never to go beyond this world, or to be of faith, of real subjection to Christ; as contrasted to seeking a people for Christ from the dominion of Satan, as Christ's servants.

And here I am led to the Petition, which, as well as the Charge, bears me out; the latter calling it "manly protests," which is exactly the limits of self-defence as a national, and therefore earthly constituted body; the former, by suggesting, as the very ground of the application for protection, their "confining themselves to the quiet discharge of their proper duties." The language of the Petition bears out, in a way I had not myself previously adverted to, the view I had taken of the principles of the Charge to be accurate. It shews that the petitioning Clergy, "influenced by a love of peace, and by a desire of avoiding even the appearance of political discussion, have been hitherto withheld from

approaching your Honourable House, against the hostility and calumny with which they and their religion have been, for a length of time, systematically assailed, under the pretence of seeking civil and religious liberty, but with the real design of obtaining powers subversive of both, and with the hope of overturning the established religion, by the defamation of its Clergy, and the misrepresentation of their faith. While any doubt could remain that such designs and such hopes existed, your Petitioners were desirous, though exposed to daily vexations, and insults, and injuries, to submit in silence, and endeavour, by the quiet discharge of their proper duties, to soften the violence of their enemies, although they had but too good reason to be convinced, that these their enemies were such from being enemies to their Church."

This is clearly a Petition for protection against defamation of the Clergy, as tending to destroy the Establishment; laying as a ground for it their having confined themselves to the quiet discharge of their proper duties. Either this means their duties as members of the Establishment, which in fact it does mean, and then the result, especially when we join it with the Charge, is to confine the whole energy of the Clergy by the measure of its consistency with their relation to the State; or. else leaving it open to the Clergy to use their utmost endeavours' for the conversion of souls to God from blindness and error, and then, when interfered with, which we may admit, it appeals for protection from this, on this ground, that they were only quietly discharging their proper duties in their volunteer efforts in the cause of delivering men from antichristian darkness. Surely they ought to count

the cost before they engage in such an enterprise, and not, when they begin to feel the brunt of the enemies' violence, to apply to extrinsic aid, alleging they were only quietly discharging their proper duties. I entreat those who value the representation which God gives in the scripture, of the state, refuge, and resources of His Church and people, as owned by Him, to compare that (I could not bring myself to do it) with the position here given them. I do own, when I consider this whole matter, and the bearing of scripture upon it, connected with circumstances on which I will not venture to touch, I could weep at men whom I love and respect, having unwittingly put their hands to this Petition.

In short, I do feel that ministers of God are called upon to entertain the question—is it our duty or calling, according to the gift bestowed upon us, to enter into conflict with the power of darkness? or do we believe that the Roman Catholic system in this country is a manifestation of it? If they do, let them fairly look to it; and count whether with ten thousand they are able to meet him that cometh against them with twenty thousand; or else let them send embassies of peace: if not, let them hold themselves to their own flocks, and instruct them as well as they can, if they are allowed by God to do so; but the fact is, that they have come forward—rather let us say, that God has manifested His light in the world, and I do feel something of the applicability of that sentence, "He that is not with me is against me." But if this be so, surely their place is the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ—their business, to endure hardness as good soldiers of His. This patience is one of the characteristics of His servants, a necessary one in the conflict with darkness. One peculiar snare

stands in their way in the present times, by which Satan would mix and so destroy the proper character of this work, one which his own subtlety has provided—this is that, having mixed Roman Catholic interests with this world and so given other men an interest in this world against them in preserving their freedom, he has added a political question to the religious one: from this snare in its broad lines the Clergy have kept themselves free. I propose to them, whether in a weaker shape apparently, though in my mind a worse one, as affirming themselves as a body acting on their own interests, and claiming alliance with the State to support them, such a claim of protection be not the same; that is, whether it leave them at perfect liberty to pursue, according to the wisdom of God, the guidance of the Spirit, in the energies that are mercifully exhibiting in this now highly favoured country. As far as my recollection goes, they will find nothing scriptural to bear them out. The ministers of Christ go on steadily then in their own course, as bearing God's commission, and suffer with Him, whom they have no reason to expect to be above finding their solace in sympathy with Him and one another, and the consciousness that herein they were partakers of the sufferings of Christ, and workers together even with God. Why should my beloved and honoured brethren (actuated, I fear not to say, by the same spirit) choose a lower place, choose not to have the fellowship of His sufferings? I know they would not—I persuade myself, at least, they will listen with candour to a very obscure brother, in suggesting the inconsistency of the principles I have been considering with this willingness, and the simplicity of faith in Him. The instances of remonstrance in Scripture are where one commissioned with the civil sword has exceeded his

power by injustice against an innocent person, who bore the spiritual commission of the same master— a marked confirmation of, and not an exception to, the principles I have suggested.

Let me be permitted to recur to the general grounds on which I have gone—that the Papacy is the organised system of Satan for keeping men's souls, where the light of Christianity had entered, as far as he possibly can, under the same bondage in which he held them under heathenism. I shall not enlarge upon this view, though full of interest, as I feel at liberty to use it as true—that it is a part of this scheme to hold nations in subjection to it. There may be therefore a twofold opposition to it; one, of the civil Sovereigns to the claim of supremacy in any shape; the other, the ministration of the word, which is God's instrument in pulling down the strongholds of Satan; but it is impossible for the minister of the latter to claim the protection of the former, on the ground of his interest in supporting him, and remain the unshackled servant of Jesus Christ.

I respectfully suggest, therefore, the double ground of the present wisdom of faith, and the consideration of the principles on which these things rest, as both leading to the conclusion, that those who have the cause of God at heart should, while they fulfil the duty in which God has cast them, unless called specially to any peculiar work, keep themselves unequivocally free to minister His grace, according as God shall give them opportunity and strength. Surely God calls them to it, calls them by the work that He has wrought, to be exceedingly wise, lest they should in any way put a hindrance to themselves. They may be sure that Satan will try every method to divert the matter from the application of that word,

which goes forth with power to the very foundation and heart of his kingdom. I do earnestly and affectionately call upon the servants of God, trusting they will not count me presumptuous, that whenever they are not simply ministering the word, under the guidance of the Spirit of wisdom, they should, as specially bound by His peculiar grace to us at present, weigh the bearings of every act with patience and wisdom. That they have done so in many instances, I doubt not. It becomes members of the Establishment, to whom Christ and the interests of His people are the centre and rule of affection and judgment, to exercise discerning wisdom on this side as well as others; because on this side, however advantageous to the Church as against evil, under divine Providence, they are in connection with, or at least brought where there may a claim on them be made by, what has no common principle of action. And especially now that so many who so long sat in darkness are coming forward to see what these new doctrines are, is it incumbent on them to present themselves as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. I have stated the principles on which my views of the whole case are founded, to which, though I believe them just, I attach no great importance; and I have ventured—what is much nearer to my heart—to urge the present work of faith, not as though I were an adviser (for I know how many are every way before me in the Lord), but as one, however unworthy, who has obtained like precious faith with them, and therefore enters into all the interests which they are desirous of promoting. If I have erred in any matter of judgment, I am willing to be corrected; and I can only trust, that as I have undertaken it with the single desire of ministering to the strength of those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in

sincerity, if it conduce to this end, I shall feel deeply the gainer: to their love I beg to commend myself, perfectly, as I trust, united with them, striving together for the faith of that blessed Gospel which has been committed to us.

After all, what am I contending for? That those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, the desire of whose heart is to fulfil the ministry which they have received, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God, and who will feel that conformity to their Master will be the order in which this testimony will be effectual, should not be precluded from such little share of the fellowship of His sufferings as may reach them in then-present circumstances, and may stamp them with the Christian character. To my mind, and I suppose to theirs on consideration, the judgment of faith is clear on the subject; and I would solemnly and anxiously urge upon them, that the adoption of the principles contained in the Charge and Petition (for they will be found one thing on consideration of them together) will preclude them from coming forward on Christian ground, and having their proper share in using this blessed opportunity for the delivering souls—I might justly say the world—from the power of darkness, and setting up the kingdom of the §on of God, as far as it is permitted to us to do it before His appearing, on its own stable and sure foundation of faith in the Lord of glory.

I will conclude with one remark. I think it will be found that practically a right faith mainly consists in seeing the glory of Christ in His humiliation—I mean, that by which a redeemed soul lives in the flesh. The Church has its being and character in this faith— “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” He formed it that He

might present it to Himself a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—not to the world. Glory in the world is essentially contrary to faith. This latter character of glory in the world is the character stamped on the Papacy: they even avow and affirm it: their glorying is in their shame, minding earthly things: they evidence themselves in consequence to be Satan's church, whose theatre is the world. The very essence of the grounds they take is setting aside faith. They make the Church, make faith, unnecessary. They will have the inheritance, like their elder brethren, the Jews, after the flesh, which is not God's way—now more deeply culpable in it, for that the nature of the inheritance is declared. But with what comfort or consistency can we, in the sight of God, when we have been delivered from this terrible delusion, oppose its progress, or pretend to deliver others from it, while we in another shape are seeking, in the least degree, the objects which are not of faith, which give the character we reprobate in them, or seek refuge from the accompaniments of faith? Our reliance, then, brethren, must be on the promises; and the consistent exhortation from God to us is, "Thou standest by faith: be not high-minded, but fear." There is a constant tendency to depart from this principle: it is not a principle of ease till the time of our rest comes, when the hope of faith shall appear. If the kings of the earth shall take us up, we may thank God for the goodness of His providence; but let us not attach ourselves to them, or fall into their principles, but let us be peculiarly watchful that it leave us what it found us—an humble, holy, self-denying people, trusting in the name of the Lord; still (while we own and accept the present blessing, as honouring our Master's name as

well as comforting us) living on what is our sole strength, the faith of the Son of God.

Affectionate confidence, mixed with fear, has made me bold to offer these thoughts to my brethren. I remain their affectionate brother and servant in the Lord.

Postscript.—The following circumstances seem to me connected with the above considerations, and will assist in conveying my views.

The oath of supremacy is proposed by the Archbishop to the converts, which, instead of opening the door of Christ to the soul in bondage, makes the admission into the Establishment a necessary condition: and I would suggest, that such a measure is exceedingly analogous to the conduct which created such difficulty at Antioch, on the admission of the Gentiles, and puts a stumbling-block in the way of a weak believer. I own myself unable to understand the fitness and still less the necessity of such a step. It is a closing of the door of Christ against weak souls; and is, on the principles of the Charge, a pledge on the part of the convert to the religion which the civil Sovereign may choose for his people. While it is on the part of the Clergy a natural consequence of the Charge and Petition; for if they propose themselves as candidates for the favour of the civil government, in order to obtain its protection, and then seek for its aid in the character in which they have proposed themselves, it is at once their interest, and I must add, their obligation to support its interests in their ministry, and bind others to the same system: but how will this consist with their duty to Christ, and the souls which He has purchased with His own blood, and gathering them for Him? Further, the admission is “into the true Catholic

Church, established in these realms." This ends in the same thing; for, instead of bringing them to graft them into the vine, the liberty and security of Christ, to pledge their souls to that which (if the civil Sovereign should choose wrong) would be Popery, and is in fact a denial of union with Christ being the vital principle and bond of the true Church, that general assembly and Church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven, which is the true Church, the fulness of Him, that filleth all in all. Here is true catholicity, and to affirm it of anything else is Popery, however modified: and Protestantism is the manifestation of faith in the word, when Satan has hidden the true Church, the assembly of believers, in a system of this world; and such a system, in a modified shape, is that maintained in the Charge.

The sermon of the Archbishop, as reported, speaks of "the scriptures as rightly interpreted": this, I conceive, is an unperceived acquiescence in Popery; for if there be an interpreter, he must, if anything, be an authorised one; which is Popery. The assertion of an interpreter is exactly contrary to the testimony of the Spirit, manifested in scripture and asserted by Protestantism, that the Scriptures are able to make wise unto salvation through faith; and to give light and understanding to the simple; so that men thereby become wiser than their teachers. But it will be said, You discard a ministry. God forbid. I look upon it as so much as is committed by the Holy Ghost of the offices of the Redeemer to men; but the system against which I remonstrate puts them in the wrong place. That of which they have a portion is all revealed to faith by the same Spirit in the Scriptures. Their order is, therefore, whether in their evangelical or episcopal characters, the representatives of the Apostle

of our profession and Bishop of our souls, to preach the truth of Christ, according to their proportion of faith, and then those who have the Scriptures, and receive the word, will search whether these things are so, and become wise unto salvation. In their episcopal character they will guide the conduct of believers, who will again find their assurance and security in the Scriptures, which make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

1 Dublin, 1827; not published.

2 Wetstein mentions a hymn, “Veteris Ecclesiæ.”

“Hostis Herodes impie

Christum venire quid times?

Non eripit mortalia

Qui regno dat ccelestia”

Translation—Hymn of the early Church.

“O wicked Herod, impious foe.

Why dost thou fear Christ’s coming here?

He snatches not at transient thrones

Who heavenly kingdoms can confer.”

3 I do not alter anything, though the expression is incorrect.

## Considerations On The Nature And Unity Of The Church Of Christ

Editor's Note 4

“That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”—John 17:21.

“And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord,” Luke 12:36.

The writer of these pages (he trusts, not the author of them) would add whatever God might afford him in ministering to the progress of the Church through the various exercises to which its faith is exposed. He cannot doubt that much of the moral truth on which the following considerations depend has been realised in the minds of believers, of students of the divine word; but he has felt in the little communion, though great intercourse, which such have with each other, that the expression of these thoughts might, by the blessing of God, direct the attention of believers to, and more explicitly manifest to the Church from the divine word, its just objects; and consequently, by their reception, determine its character and conduct; ensuring, under God’s blessing, more consistency of operation; stablish, strengthen, settle it in its own hopes, and make it exhibit with more clearness and power the grace of God to the world; lead believers to more explicit reliance on the operations of the divine Spirit, and to look less to the plans of men and human co-operations, or what will be found in the end to be human interests. While the aims and purposes of believers are very mixed in their nature,

and fall far below the standard for which God has gathered them, and which He proposes as the influential object of their faith and consequently motive of their conduct, division, and sectarianism are, even in the mercy of God's providence, the necessary result, whether it assume the character of Establishment or of Dissent. I am supposing here, of course, that the great truths of the gospel are the professed faith of the churches, as they are in all the genuine Protestant churches. For the just consequence of the reception of gospel facts by faith and its end in man is the purification of the desires in love—a life to Him who died for us and rose again, a life of hope in His glory. To suppose therefore unity where the life of the Church falls entirely short of the just consequences of its faith, is to suppose that the Spirit of God would acquiesce in the moral inconsistency of degenerate man, and that God would be satisfied that His Church should sink below the glory of its great Head, without even a testimony that He was dishonoured by it. In truth it has never been so: judgments from without for a good while marked His displeasure while it was sinking, and when it was utterly sunk in apostasy, He raised His witnesses, who should sigh and cry for the abominations that were done in it; who, in much darkness of spiritual understanding, bore testimony against the moral corruption that had overwhelmed the Church; and who, in the acknowledgment of the redemption by the Lord Jesus out of this present evil world, testified the apostasy of the professing church. When it pleased God to raise this testimony into the place of public sanction, while doctrinal truth (we may believe) was fully developed for the foundation and edification of the faith of believers, it by no means followed that the Church

thereupon emerged wholly in spirit and power from the depression, and assumed the character which it has in the purpose of its Author, and became an adequate and distinctive witness of His thoughts to the world. Such indeed, however blessed, as we are all bound most thankfully to acknowledge the Reformation to have been, was not the case: it was much and manifestly mixed with human agency. And though the exhibition of the word, as that on which the soul could, rest itself, was graciously afforded, still there was much of the old system which remained in the constitution of the churches, and which was in no way the result of the development of the mind of Christ, by setting up the light and authority of the word. This gave to the state and practice of the Church (whatever the excellence of individuals may have been) a character which many discerned to be short of that which was acceptable to God: and the authority of the word having been recognised as the basis of the Reformation, many sought to follow it, as they supposed, more perfectly. Hence arose all the branches of Nonconformity and Dissent, which prevailed when the Spirit of God was poured out, in proportion to the secularity or alienation from God of the body publicly recognised as the Church. For it must be observed that, since the time when Popery prevailed over the nations till lately, among those who have taken a share in the revival of religion, that has in general been called the Church which has been received as such by the rulers of this world, not those who were delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son; who were come to the “general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.” These observations are in some measure applicable to all the great national

Protestant bodies since the outward form and constitution became so prominent a matter, which was not the case originally while deliverance from Babylon was in question.

From all this has flowed an anomalous and trying consequence; namely, that the true Church of God has no avowed communion at all. There are, I suppose, none of its members who would not now acknowledge, that individuals of the children of God are to be found in all the different denominations, who profess the same pure faith; but where is their bond of union? It is not that unbelieving professors are mixed with the people of God in their communion, but that the bond of communion is not the unity of the people of God, but really (in point of fact) their differences.

The bonds of nominal union are such as separate the children of God from each other; so that, instead of (itself an imperfect state) unbelievers being found mixed up with them, the people of God are found as individuals, among bodies of professing Christians, joined in communion upon other and different grounds; not in fact as the people of God at all. The truth of this, I think, cannot be denied, and surely it is a very extraordinary state for the Church to be in. I think the study of the history of the Church (bearing in mind what the true Church of God is) will enable us to account for it. Such is not my present purpose, as writing merely on the principle of that inquiring, strengthening character, in which they that feared the Lord spake often one to another. But it must surely form a practical matter of great importance to the judgment of those who, loving Jerusalem— “it pitieth them to see her in the dust”— those who “wait for the consolation of Israel.” I do

believe, indeed, that there will be a gradual development of the people of God, by a separation from the world of which many of them perhaps now think little. The Lord will be present with His people in the hour of their temptation, and hide them secretly in the tabernacle of His presence; but it is not my purpose to follow presumptuously my own thoughts about this. We may remark that the people of God have found, since the increased outpouring of His Spirit,5 a sort of remedy for this disunion (manifestly an imperfect, though not an untrue one), in the Bible Society, and in Missionary exertions; which gave—the one, a sort of vague unity in the common acknowledgment of the word, which, if investigated, will be found to have partially inherent in it, though not recognised in its power, the germ of true unity—the other, an unity of desire and action, which tended in thought towards that kingdom, the want of the power of which was felt. And in this they found some relief for that sense of want, which the workings of the divine Spirit had produced in them.

From the state of things of which I have spoken have resulted other efforts, either of the energies of knowledge, or the desires of spiritual life, exercising themselves, often to the peril of the individual, in (as it is conceived) mistaken efforts at producing a separation or reunion of believers, by taking a ground of their separation quite distinct from ordinary dissent as much as from Establishment. The spirit and desire in which much of this was carried on, was, doubtless, in many instances the genuine cravings of a mind actuated by the Spirit of God; but it has often been defective, in not practically waiting upon His will; and though doubtless affording a part of that testimony to what the Church

was, which was consistent with the infirmity of our nature and the actual position of the Church, yet, even when of the highest order, it has failed for the reason mentioned, as in fact it ran before the general progress of the divine counsels. But those strivings of the Spirit in us (for such I believe them to be) are surely deserving of the serious attention of the people of God. This painful sense of our immense distance from that genuine exhibition of the purpose of God in His church, this looking after His power and glory, ought to lead us to thankfulness that He still thus deals with us, and to receive it as a pledge of that faithfulness which shall make the people of God, in due time, shine in the glory of the Lord. It should lead us also assiduously to seek what is the mind of Christ as to the path of believers in the present day; that it may be, though not exactly according to their own desires, yet perfectly according to what His present will concerning them is. We know that it was the purpose of God in Christ to gather in one all things in heaven and on earth; reconciled unto Himself in Him; and that the church should be, though necessarily imperfect in His absence, yet by the energy of the Spirit the witness of this on earth, by gathering the children of God which were scattered abroad.. Believers know that all who are born of the Spirit have substantial unity of mind, so as to know each other, and love each other, as brethren. But this is not all, even if it were fulfilled in practice, which it is not; for they were so to be all one, as that the world might know that Jesus was sent of God: in this we must all confess our sad failure. I shall not attempt so much to propose measures here for the children of God, as to establish healthful principles: for it is manifest to me, that it must flow from the growing influence of the Spirit of God and His

unseen teaching; but we may observe what are positive hindrances, and in what that union consisted.

In the first place, it is not a formal union of the outward professing bodies that is desirable; indeed it is surprising that reflecting Protestants should desire it: far from doing good, I conceive it would be impossible that such a body could be at all recognised as the church of God. It would be a counterpart to Romish unity; we should have the life of the church and the power of the word lost, and the unity of spiritual life utterly excluded. Whatever plans may be in the order of Providence, we can only act upon the principles of grace; and true unity is the unity of the Spirit, and it must be wrought by the operation of the Spirit. In the great darkness of the Church hitherto, outward division has been a main support, not only of zeal (as is very generally admitted), but also of the authority of the word, which is instrumentally the life of the church; and the Reformation consisted not, as has been commonly said, in the institution of a pure form of church, but in setting up the word, and the great Christian foundation and corner stone of "Justification by faith," in which believers might find life. But further, if the view that has been taken of the state of the church be correct, we may adjudge that he is an enemy to the work of the Spirit of God who seeks the interests of any particular denomination; and that those who believe in "the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ" ought carefully to keep from such a spirit; for it is drawing back the church to a state occasioned by ignorance and non-subjection to the word, and making a duty of its worst and antichristian results. This is a most subtle and prevailing mental disease, "he followeth not us" even

when men are really Christians. Let the people of God see if they be not hindering the manifestation of the church by this spirit. I believe there is scarcely a public act of Christian men (at any rate of the higher orders, or of those who are active in the nominal churches), which is not infected with this; but its tendency is manifestly hostile to the spiritual interests of the people of God, and the manifestation of the glory of Christ. Christians are little aware how this prevails in their minds; how they seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ; and how it dries up the springs of grace and spiritual communion; how it precludes that order to which blessing is attached— the gathering together in the Lord's name. No meeting, which is not framed to embrace all the children of God in the full basis of the kingdom of the Son, can find the fulness of blessing, because it does not contemplate it—because its faith does not embrace it.

Where two or three are gathered together in His name, His name is recorded there for blessing; because they are met in the fulness of the power of the unchangeable interests of that everlasting kingdom in which it has pleased the glorious Jehovah to glorify Himself, and to make His name and saving health known in the Person of the Son, by the power of the Spirit. In the name of Christ, therefore, they enter (in whatever measure of faith) into the full counsels of God, and are "fellow-workers under God." Thus whatever they ask is done, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. But the very foundation on which these promises rest is broken up, and its consistency destroyed, by bonds of communion not formed on the scope of the purposes of God in Christ. I say not, indeed, that they may not find a feeble

measure of spiritual food; which, though generally partial in its character, may be suited to strengthen their personal hope of eternal life. But the glory of the Lord is very near the believing soul, and, in proportion as we seek it, will personal blessing be found. It puts me in mind indeed (as all doubtless have some separate portion of the form of the church) of those who parted the Saviour's garments among them; while that inner vest, which could not be rended, which was inseparably one in its nature, was cast lots for whose it should be; but in the meanwhile, the name of Him, the presence of the power of whose life would unite them all in appropriate order, is left exposed and dishonoured. Indeed, I fear that these have fallen too much into the hands of those who care not for Him, and that the Lord will never clothe Himself with them again, viewed in their present state. Indeed, it could not be when He appears in His glory. I say it not in presumption or dislike (for the reproach of it is a grievous burden, it is an humbling, most afflicting thought): but that second temple, which had been raised by the mercy of God after the long Babylonish captivity, we have learned to trust in too much as "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these"; we have been haughty because of the Lord's holy mountain; we have looked at it as adorned with goodly stones and gifts; and have ceased to look to the Lord of the temple—have ceased almost to walk by faith, or to have communion in the hope of the return of the messenger of the covenant to be the glory of this latter house. The unclean spirit of idolatry may have been purged out; but the great question still remains, Is there the effectual presence of the Spirit of the Lord, or is it merely empty, swept and garnished? If we have been at all blessed, are we not disregarding Him from

whom it came, by pride, and self-complacency, and seeking to turn it to our own, instead of going on to His, glory? Let us then pass, brethren beloved of the Lord—ye who love Him in sincerity, and would rejoice in His voice—to the practical exigency of our present situation. Let us weigh His mind concerning us. The Lord has made known His purposes in Him, and how those purposes are effected. “He hath made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he should gather together in one all things in Christ, whether they be things in heaven, or things on earth, even in him, in whom we also have received an inheritance” —in one and in Christ. In Him alone therefore can we find this unity; but the blessed word (who can be thankful enough for it?) will inform us further. It is as to its earthly members “gathering together in one, the children of God who are scattered abroad.” And how is this? “That one man should die for them.” As our Lord in the vision of the fruit of the travail of His soul declares, “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will drawn all men unto me: this he said signifying what death he.should die.” It is then Christ who will draw—will draw to Himself (and nothing short of or less than this can produce unity, “He that gathereth not with him, scattereth “); and draw to Himself by being lifted up from the earth. In a word, we find His death is the centre of communion till His coming again, and in this rests the whole power of truth. Accordingly, the outward symbol and instrument of unity is the partaking of the Lord’s supper—for we being many are one “bread, one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.” And what does Paul declare to be the true intent and testimony of that rite? That whensoever “ye eat this

bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." Here then are found the character and life of the church, that into which it is called, that in which the truth of its existence subsists, and in which alone is true unity. It is showing forth the Lord's death, by the efficiency of which they were gathered, and which is the fruitful seed of the Lord's own glory; which is indeed the gathering of His body, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all"; and shewing it forth in the assurance of His coming, "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe." Accordingly the essence and substance of unity, which will appear in glory at His coming, is conformity to His death, by which that glory was all wrought. And it will be found in result, that conformity to His death will be our frame for glory with Him at His appearing; as the apostle desires, "that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Have we faith in these things? How shall we shew it? By acting on these directions of our Lord, which are founded on His divine knowledge of the objects of faith. What follows upon our Lord's declaration, in the view of His glory, that it must be by His death? "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." The servant is he who is to be honoured. If we would be servants, we must be so in following Him who died for us. And in following Him, our honour will be to be with Him in "his glory, and the glory of his Father, and of the holy angels."

It is matter of great thankfulness that, notwithstanding the scattering of the church, by its becoming of this world as a body, and its most imperfect revival by the discovery of the free hope of glory, believers have a way before them marked in the word; that, if we are not given to see as yet the glory of the children of God, the path of that glory in the wilderness should be revealed to us. We are assured, in doctrine, that the death of the Lord, in whom the free gift came, is the sole foundation on which a soul is built for eternal glory. In truth it is only to believers in this that I address myself. Our duty as believers is to be witnesses of what we believe. “Ye,” says the God of the Jews by the prophet Isaiah, “are my witnesses,” in His challenge to the false gods; and as Christ is the faithful and true Witness, such ought the church to be. “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye may shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” Of what then is the church to be a witness—against the idolatrous glory of the world? Even of that glory into which Christ has risen, by their practical conformity to His death; of their true belief in the cross, by their being crucified to the world, and the world to them. Unity, the unity of the church, to which “the Lord added daily such as should be saved” (the saved6), was when none said anything was his own, and “their conversation was in heaven “; for they could not be divided in the common hope of that. It knit men’s hearts together by necessity. The Spirit of God has left it upon record, that division began about the goods of the church, even in their best use, on the part of those interested in them; for there could be division, there could be selfish interests. Am I desiring believers to correct the churches? I am beseeching them

to correct themselves, by living up, in some measure, to the hope of their calling. I beseech them to shew their faith in the death of the Lord Jesus, and their boast in the glorious assurance which they have obtained by it, by conformity to it—to shew their faith in His coming, and practically to look for it by a life suitable to desires fixed upon it. Let them testify against the secularity and blindness of the church; but let them be consistent in their own conduct. “Let your moderation be known to all men.” While the spirit of the world prevails (and how much it prevails, I am persuaded few believers are at all aware) spiritual union cannot subsist. Few believers are at all aware how the spirit which gradually opened the door to the dominion of apostasy, still sheds its wasting and baneful influence over the professing church. They think, because they were delivered from its secular dominion, that they are free from the practical spirit which gave rise to it; and because God has wrought much deliverance, therefore they are to be content. Nothing could be a testimony of a greater alienation of the mind from the Spirit of promise, which, having the prize of the high calling of God set before it, ever presses towards it, ever seeks conformity to death, that it may attain to the resurrection of the dead. It waits for the Lord, and, beholding His glory in unveiled face, is “changed into the same image, from glory to glory.” For, let us ask, is the church of God as believers would have it? Do we not believe that it was, as a body, utterly departed from Him? Is it restored so that He would be glorified in it at His appearing? Is the union of believers such as He marks to be their peculiar characteristic? Are there not unremoved hindrances? Is there not a practical spirit of worldliness in essential variance with the true termini of the gospel—the death and coming

again of the Lord Jesus as Saviour? Can believers say they act on the precept of their moderation being known unto all men? I do believe that God is working, by means and in ways little thought of, in preparing the way of the Lord, and making His paths straight—doing by a mixture of providence and testimony the work of Elias. I am persuaded that He will put men to shame exactly in the things in which they have boasted. I am persuaded that He will stain the pride of human glory, “and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be brought low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day; for the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low; and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, and the idols he shall utterly abolish; and they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.”

But there is a practical part for believers to act. They can lay their hand upon many things in themselves practically inconsistent with the power of that day—things which shew that their hope is not in it—conformity to the worlds which shews that the cross has not its proper glory in their eyes. These things let them weigh. These are but desultory suggestions; but are they the testimony of the Spirit or not? Let them be tried by the word. Let the almighty doctrine of the cross be testified to all men, and let the eye of the believer be directed to the coming of the Lord. But let us not defraud our souls of all the glory which accompanied that hope, by setting our affections on things which will be proved to have had their origin in this world, and to end in it. Will they abide His coming?

Further, unity is the glory of the church; but unity to secure and promote our own interests is not the unity of the church, but confederacy and denial of the nature and hope of the church. Unity, that is of the church, is the unity of the Spirit, and can only be in the things of the Spirit, and therefore can only be perfected in spiritual persons. It is indeed the essential character of the church, and this strongly testifies to the believer its present state. But, I ask, if the professing church seeks worldly interests, and if the Spirit of God be amongst us, will it then be the minister of unity in such pursuits as these? If the various professing churches seek it, each for itself, no answer need be given. But if they unite in seeking a common interest, let us not be deceived; it is no better, if it be not the work of the Lord. There are two things which we have to consider. First, Are our objects in our work exclusively the Lord’s objects, and no other? If they have not been such in bodies separate from each

other, they will not be in any union of them together. Let the Lord's people weigh this. Secondly, let our conduct be the witness of" our objects. If we are not living in the power of the Lord's kingdom, we certainly shall not be consistent in seeking its ends. Let it enter our minds, while we are all thinking what good thing we may do to inherit eternal life, to sell all that we have, take up our cross, and follow Christ. Does not this go very close to the hearts of many?

Let us bear in mind then strongly the following truths—that what are called communions are (as to the mind of the Lord about His church) disunion; and, in fact, a disavowal of Christ and the word. "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" "Is Christ divided?" Is He not, as far as our disobedient hearts are concerned? I ask believers, "whereas there is among you envying and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"

Yea, there is no professed unity among you at all. So far as men pride themselves on being Established, Presbyterian, Baptist, Independent, or anything else, they are antichristian. How then are we to be united? I answer, it must be the work of the Spirit of God. Do you follow the testimony of that Spirit in the word as is practically applicable to your consciences, lest that day take you unawares? "Whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." "And if in anything ye be otherwise (that is, differently) minded, God shall reveal this also unto you," and shew us the right path. Let us rest on this promise of Him who cannot lie. Let the strong bear the infirmity of the weak, and not please themselves. Professed churches (especially those established) have sinned

greatly in insisting on things indifferent and hindering the union of believers, and this charge rests heavily on the hierarchies of the several churches. Certainly order is necessary; but where they said, ‘the things are indifferent and nothing in themselves: therefore you must use them for our pleasure’s sake,’ the word of the Spirit of Christ says, ‘they are indifferent: therefore we will yield to your weakness, and not offend a brother for whom Christ died.’ Paul would have eaten no meat while the world endured, if it had hurt the conscience of a weak brother, though the weak brother was in the wrong. And why insisted on? Because they gave distinction and place in the world. If the pride of authority and the pride of separation were dissolved (neither of which are of the Spirit of Christ), and the word of the Lord taken as the sole practical guide, and sought to be acted up to by believers, we shall be spared much judgment, though we shall not perhaps find altogether the glory of the Lord, and many a poor believer, on whom the eye of the Lord is set for blessing, would find comfort and rest. Yet to such I say, Fear not, you know in whom you have believed, and if judgments do come, dearest brethren, you may lift up your heads, “for your redemption draweth nigh.” But for the churches (if yet the Lord might have mercy, for sanction them in their present state He cannot, as they must own), let them judge themselves by the word. Let believers remove the hindrances to the Lord’s glory, which their own inconsistencies present, and by which they are joined to the world, and their judgments perverted. Let them commune one with another, seeking His will from the word, and see if a blessing do not attend it; at any rate it will attend themselves; they will meet the Lord as those that have waited for Him, and

can rejoice unfeignedly in His salvation. Let them begin by studying the twelfth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, if they think they are partakers of the unspeakable redemption wrought by the cross.

Let me ask the professing churches, in all love, one question. They have often professed to the Roman Catholics, and truly too, their unity in doctrinal faith; why then is there not an actual unity? If they see error in each other, ought they not to be humbled for each other? Why not, as far as was attained, mind the same rule, speak the same thing; and if in anything there was diversity of mind (instead of disputing on the footing of ignorance), wait in prayer, that God might reveal this also unto them. Ought not those who love the Lord amongst them, to see if they could not discern a cause? Yet I well know that, till the spirit of the world be purged from amongst them, unity cannot be, nor believers find safe rest. I fear lest it should be by the “spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning.” The children of God can but follow one thing—the glory of the Lord’s name, and that according to the way marked in the word; if the professing church be proud of itself, and neglect this, they have nothing else left, but as He, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, “suffered without the gate, to go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” It were well to weigh deeply the second and third chapters of Zephaniah. What is going on in England at this moment—a moment of anxiety and distress of judgment among her political and thinking men? Why, we see the Dissenting churches using the advocacy of actual unbelievers, and the Established church, of practical unbelievers (I say it in no scorn to them), to obtain a share in, or keep to themselves the

secular advantages and honours of that world out of which the Lord came to redeem us. Is this like His peculiar people? What have I to do with these things? Nothing. But as there are brethren connected both with one and the other, every one who thinks of it has to testify with his whole strength, that somehow or other he may keep himself clear of it, that he be not ashamed in the day of the Lord's coming. And many whom the people of God have trusted in, and relied upon, as they that have understanding, go on in the train; and the simple, as they that followed Absalom, go after them, not knowing whither they are going.

We may well believe what this advocacy is. But what a substitute for leaning on the Lord Jehovah the Saviour for the spiritual prosperity of His own people, as their servants in prayer and ministry for His name's sake: while, as we might well suppose, their advocates use them but as the instruments of their own party purposes. But such alliances cannot prosper. But what are the people of the Lord to do? Let them wait upon the Lord, and wait according to the teaching of His Spirit, and in conformity to the image, by the life of the Spirit, of His Son. Let them go their way forth by the footsteps of the flock, if they would know where the good Shepherd feeds His flock at noon. Let them be followers of them who, through faith and patience inherit the promises, remembering the word: "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him." And if the way seem dark amongst them, let them recollect the word of Isaiah: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in

darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

If I be asked again what have I to do with them; I can only answer, that I earnestly care for them: for the Dissenters for their integrity of conscience, and often deep apprehensions of the mind of Christ; and for the church, if it were but for the memory of those men, who, however they may have been outwardly entangled with what was not of their own spirit and failed in freeing themselves from it, seem to have inwardly drunk more deeply of the Spirit of Him who called them, than any since the days of the apostles; men in whose communion I thankfully delight myself, whom I delight to honour. But are there none to call in mind the spirit they were of? We have many advantages which they had not. O that God may put the presence7 of His Spirit in many to work the work while it is called to-day: that He may take away the spirit of slumber from them that sleep, and lead in His own path—the narrow but blessed path which leadeth unto life—the path in which the Lord of glory trod—those whom He has awakened, that they may walk in the light of the Lord.

But if any one will say, if you see these things, what are you doing yourself? I can only deeply acknowledge the strange and infinite shortcomings, and sorrow and mourn over them', I acknowledge the weakness of my faith, but I earnestly seek for direction. And let me add, when so many who ought to guide go their own way, those who would have gladly followed are made slow and feeble lest they should in any wise err from the straight path, and hinder their service though their souls might be safe. But I would solemnly repeat what I said before—the unity of the church cannot possibly be found

till the common object of those who are members of it is the glory of the Lord, who is the Author and finisher of its faith: a glory which is to be made known in its brightness at His appearing, when the fashion of this world shall pass away, and therefore acted up to and entered upon in spirit when we are planted together in the likeness of His death. Because unity can, in the nature of things, be there only; unless the Spirit of God who brings His people together, gather them for purposes not of God, and the counsels of God in Christ come to nought. The Lord Himself says, “That they all may be one; as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”

O that the church would weigh this word, and see if their present state do not preclude necessarily their shining in the glory of the Lord, or of fulfilling that purpose for which they were called. And I ask them, do they at all look for or desire this? or are they content to sit down and say, that His promise is come utterly to an end for evermore? Surely if we cannot say, “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee,” we should say, “Awake, awake, put on thy strength, arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, as in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab and wounded the dragon? “Surely the eye hath not seen nor ear heard what He prepareth for him that waiteth for Him. Will He give His glory to one division or

another? Or where will He find a place for it to rest upon amongst us? Or is it that finding the life of your hand, therefore you are not grieved? Yet will He surely gather His people and they shall be ashamed.

I have gone beyond my original intention in this paper; if I have in anything gone beyond the measure of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, I shall thankfully accept reproof, and pray God to make it forgotten.

4 Dublin, 1828.

5 I leave this and other incorrect expressions unchanged.

6 I believe the Authorised Version right; Acts 2:47.

7 More correctly power. Perhaps a misprint in the original.

## The Notion Of A Clergyman

Dispensationally The Sin Against The Holy Ghost

[It is necessary to give a brief account of the following tract, which is now published for the first time. It was intended to be published at the time; but the printer and publisher shewed it privately to some of the influential clergy before it was published, and I was surrounded and entreated not to publish it (I cannot really, at this distance of time, say by whom), and gave way. We can all understand (at least, any who have had deep convictions on points which affect the whole standing of the church of God) how (however deep internal convictions of any such truths may be) a serious and conscientious mind may hesitate as to putting forth what may shock the feelings of many godly persons, and violates established order; and in such matters all ought to be not only conscientious but serious, have the fear of God, and not merely an opinion on that which may. work deeply in the minds of any, and affect so sacred a thing, the only sacred thing in the world, as the church of God. It never therefore appeared. Nor do I, though it may appear to be weakness in myself, regret it at the hands of Him who makes all things work together for good to them that love Him. I have a deep, abiding conviction that the building up of good can alone give lasting blessing, not the attacking evil. I would press it on every one who seeks good. I had not the most distant feeling of enmity against any, nor against the Establishment; I loved it still, I looked at it as a barrier against Popery. When I left it, I published the tract on “The Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ.” Every one knows, and for myself

it is a matter of profound sorrow, and a sign of approaching judgment, that it has ceased to be such a barrier, and, for many, has been the road into it, and that infidel principles have been judicially pronounced to be fully admissible in it. Christians are thrown (where Paul originally threw them when warning them of the perilous times of the last days) on the word of God, and knowing of whom they have learned anything; as to which we have this word of the Apostle John, “He that is of God heareth us” —not tradition, not the fathers in numberless folios, but “us”—not development nor decrees of violent and clashing councils, but “that which was from the beginning,” and, I add, the infallible faithfulness of an ascended Lord. But we are thus cast on great principles, I mean scriptural principles and truth. Of this the presence of the Holy Ghost is a cardinal one. I may add as that which led to this (I mean as to the truth itself in my own soul), that, after I had been converted six or seven years, I learned by divine teaching what the Lord says in John 14, “In that day ye shall know … that ye are in me, and I in you” —that I was one with Christ before God, and I found peace, and I have never, with many shortcomings, lost it since. The same truth brought me out of the Establishment. I saw that the true church was composed of those who were thus united to Christ; I may add, it led me to wait for God’s Son from heaven; for if I was sitting in heavenly places in Him, what was I waiting for but that He should come and take me there? The infinite love of God flowed early into my soul in this process which the Lord was carrying on. Previously I had had, from the first, the deepest possible convictions of sin, and had known and after some years taught that Christ alone could fill up that abyss, but not that He had. I had passed in the

deepest way, fasting (a thing which, I believe, if spiritually used, may be most useful), but then in a legal spirit, and in an elaborate system of devotedness, sacraments, and church-going, through what is now called Puseyism; but had found that Christ and not that could give peace, but had not found it; I sought it, looked for the proofs of regeneration in myself, which can never give peace, rested in hope in Christ's work, but not in faith, till I found it, as I have stated, when laid by for some time by what is called accident, from outward labour. The presence of the Spirit of God, the promised Comforter, had then become a deep conviction of my soul from scripture. This soon after applied itself to ministry. I said to myself, if Paul came here, he could not preach, he has no letters of orders; if the bitterest opponent of his doctrine came who had, he would, according to the system, be entitled. It is not a wicked man slipping in (that may happen anywhere)—it is the system itself. The system is wrong. It substitutes man for God. True ministry is the gift and the power of God's Spirit, not man's appointment. I state merely the great principle. This principle, with a process and with a delay the details of which I cannot recall and which are immaterial, was under deep pressure of conscience, the source and origin, as a principle, of the following tract (printed, I suppose, now seven-and-thirty years ago). There will be found immaturity in it in expression. The sin against the Holy Ghost, though universally used, is not a scriptural expression. Every sin a Christian commits is a sin against the Holy Ghost; for the Holy Ghost dwells in him, and he grieves that Holy One by whom he is sealed to the day of redemption. But the principle is one of deep importance, one on which the status of the church and the Christian depends—the

security of the one, as well as that by which he is responsible and judged in his walk, and the ground of judgment of the other. I did not save myself in any way by not publishing it. It was soon bruited about, and of course held, that I charged each clergyman with the sin against the Holy Ghost, which the tract itself entirely disclaims. It is a question of the dispensational standing of the church in the world—a statement that that depends wholly on the power and presence of the Holy Ghost, and that the notion of a clergyman contradicts His title and power, on which the standing of the church down here depends. It is the habitation of God through the Spirit. Scripture is clear, that if the Gentiles do not abide in God's goodness, they will be cut off like the Jews. It equally predicts a falling away, which is hot continuing in God's goodness. I believe these times are hasting greatly. I add, that there may be no mistake, that I have an absolute confidence in the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus, the great Head of the Church, that what He builds will endure and be translated to heaven, when God judges the corrupt and evil system (which He as certainly will do) which bears His name, and Christ Himself becomes in glory the blessed witness of His unchangeable faithfulness and love. The doctrine of the church as the house of God (Eph. 2, and 2 Tim.) became developed in my mind much later; and I add here, that I believe the confounding the church, as man built it, as committed to his responsibility (1 Cor. 3), resulting in the great house, with Christ's building (though the former be God's building responsibly in the world), and attributing the privileges of the body to all that are in the house, is the origin of the corruption, which has defiled, and for which God will judge the guilty, professing body with His sorest judgment. The tract is

given as it was printed at first. As I have spoken of myself (always a hazardous thing), I add that at the same period in which I was brought to liberty and to believe, with divinely given faith, in the presence of the Holy Spirit, I passed through the deepest possible exercise as to the authority of the word: whether if the world and the Church (that is, as an external thing, for it yet had certain traditional power over me as such) disappeared and were annihilated, and the word of God alone remained as an invisible thread over the abyss, my soul would trust in it. After deep exercise of soul I was brought by grace to feel I could entirely. I never found it fail me since. I have often failed; but I never found it failed me. I have added this, not, I trust, to speak of myself—an unpleasant and unsatisfactory, a dangerous thing—nor do I speak of any vision, but because, having spoken of the presence of the Holy Ghost, if I had not brought in this as to the word, the statement would have been seriously incomplete. In these days especially, when the authority of His written word is called in question on every side, it became important to state this part also of the history.]

In the statement which I make here, I make no rash or hasty expression of feeling, but what I believe the Lord would press upon the minds of Christians, and that which they must receive: that, the converse of which He might bear with in practice, while it did not interfere with and oppose the purposes of His grace, winking at the ignorance, but cannot when it does.

The statement which I make is this, that I believe the notion of a Clergyman to be the sin against the Holy Ghost in this dispensation. I am not talking of individuals wilfully committing it, but that the thing itself is such as

regards this dispensation, and must result in its destruction: the substitution of something for the power and presence of that holy, blessed, and blessing Spirit, by which this dispensation is characterised, and by which the unrenewedness of man, and the authority of man, holds the place which alone that blessed Spirit has power and title to fill, as that other Comforter which should abide for ever.

If the notion of a Clergyman has had the effect of the substitution of anything which is of man, and therefore subject to Satan, in the place and prerogative of that blessed Spirit exercising the vicarship of Christ in the world, it is clear, that however the providence of God may have overruled it, in the ignorance which He could wink at, it does, when stood upon and rested in against the presence and work of the Spirit, become direct sin against Him—pure, dreadful, and destructive evil—the very cause of destruction to the church. I must be observed here to say nothing whatever against offices in the church of Christ, and the exercise of authority in them, whether episcopal or evangelical in character. It were a vain and unnecessary work here to prove the recognition of that on which scripture is so plain. But they are spoken of in Scripture as gifts derived from on high: “He gave some apostles” (Eph. 4:5, 7, 11); so in 1 Corinthians 12, they are known only as gifts. My objection to the notion of a Clergyman is, that it substitutes something in the place of all these, which cannot be said to be of God at all, and is not found in Scripture. Now, I believe the whole principle of this to be contained in this dispensation in the word clergyman, and that this is the necessary root of that denial of the

Holy Ghost which must, from the nature of the dispensation, end in its dissolution.

I am quite aware that people will say, that this is not the sin against the Holy Ghost, that it may amount to resisting the Holy Ghost, but sin against the Holy Ghost is quite another thing. It is not so much another thing as people suppose. At any rate the cause of the destruction of the Jewish system was this very thing: “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye.” And I am perfectly satisfied, however this dispensation may be prolonged in order to the gathering of souls out of the world, of God’s elect, it has sealed its destruction in the rejection and resistance of the Spirit of God. But I go a great deal farther, and I affirm, though that were sin enough, that the notion of a Clergyman puts the dispensation specifically in the position of the sin against the Holy Ghost, and that every Clergyman is contributing to this. The sin against the Holy Ghost was the ascribing to the power of evil that which came from the Holy Ghost: and such is the direct operation of the idea of a Clergyman. It charges the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, which the Spirit gives by the mouth of those whom He chooses,8 whom they are pleased to call laymen, and the righteousness of conduct which flows from the reception of that testimony, with disorder and schism. Now, God is not the author of confusion or disorder, nor of schism, but the enemy of souls is; and to charge the plain testimony which the Holy Ghost gives concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, and the effects which it produces, with disorder and schism, is to charge the work of God with being evil, and from the evil one. But if clergymen have the exclusive privilege of preaching, teaching, and ministering communion, which they claim,

and which is the very sense and meaning of their distinctive title, then must it be all evil. That is, the notion of a Clergyman necessarily involves the charge of evil on the work of the Holy Ghost, and therefore, I say, that the notion of a Clergyman involves the dispensation, where insisted upon, in the sin against the Holy Ghost.

Sinners are converted to God, souls called out of darkness, the truth preached with energy and love to souls, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, in the constraint and constancy (in whatever weakness) of the Redeemer's love: men are gathered from evil and wickedness (for I will put the fullest case my adversaries could wish) into the communion of the Lord's love, to bear witness to their sole dependence on His dying love; and this is producing confusion and schism— of which God is not the author, but Satan—because they are not, nor are brought together by, clergymen! What is this but to charge the work of divine grace with proceeding from, and having the character of, the author of evil, which is blasphemy? and this is the immediate and direct effect, the necessary effect, of the notion—the exclusive notion of a Clergyman.

And this is a thing of very common operation where a number of unconverted clergymen are; and how common this is, yea, how it is the case in a large majority of instances, is well known. There all the operations of God's Spirit are charged with confusion and schism; and therefore I affirm, that the idea of a Clergyman, that is, of a humanly appointed office, taking the place and assuming the authority of the Spirit of God, necessarily involves (in its condemnation of what the Holy Ghost does do) in the sin against the Holy

Ghost: and I defy any one to shew how it can be otherwise. Those who would most oppose that which I am now writing, would admit, that not half a dozen, or possibly none, of the Bishops are of God's appointing; and this is the case with the highest churchman, in consequence of their being appointed simply by the King's Letters Patent.9 And yet all those who charge the efforts of others with schism and confusion, derive all their authority and distinction from those who, they admit, are not appointed by God at all; and yet charge them with schism, because they act on the same notion, and do not, therefore, look to that authority, while the effect of the authority thus ungodlily recognised is necessarily to throw those whom God does appoint into the position of schism and disorder. The notion of a Clergyman consists in acknowledging that, as the source of authority, which, they admit, is not appointed by God at all.

Let any layman ask a conscientious clergyman, who is converted to God, whether he believes the mass of the bishops are appointed by God? He must say, No; and yet he has no other authority whatever, as a clergyman; and condemns others solely by virtue of his possessing this assumed authority, which, he admits, is not of God, but by virtue of which he calls the Spirit's operations in and by others disorder and schism.

But are there no clergymen Christians? Doubtless, there are. And they are all trying to do in spite of the Bishops what they condemn others for doing; and are forced into the position, by being clergymen, of resisting God or the bishops they derive their authority from.

They cannot deny that the work going on in the country is from God, though it be not by clergymen; but they condemn it as evil, and therein sin against the Holy Ghost—and do so as clergymen: and their only ground of so charging it is this notion of a Clergyman. And now let us cast our eyes round every place, and see what is the position and character which this name occupies. I affirm that it comes from God in nowise. An ungodly man, be he a very hater of God, can confer it the same as the most godly, were he in such an office; the most ungodly man can be it as well as the most godly; and the most ungodly man can receive it, honour it, and attach all its value to it as much as the godly. Can this be the case with anything spiritual which comes from God? I affirm that it cannot: that it is quite otherwise with spiritual authority, which it most assumes to be like.

Nay, much more, you will find the value and estimation of a clergyman as such (I am not speaking of individual grace) to be precisely in proportion to the blindness, darkness, and ignorance of the person who may have it; I appeal to any one for the truth of this.

Now, the deference and obedience to a spiritual pastor will be just in proportion to the right feeling—to the holiness of mind of the Christian; but in the same proportion will his idea of a clergyman be weakened, and will he judge according to what they are, if they assume any office circumstantially connected with the name. The value attached to it is a purely worldly thing: a thing of this world, with the pretence of religion in its external character, which is just the destruction of the church—the essential characteristic of apostasy.

Let us consider it in its actual operation. If we go to India, the difficulty to be got over, the persons to be soothed and won, so that the gospel should not be hindered, are the clergy; I speak of nominal Christianity in India, as on the Malabar Coast and their Catanars. Go to Armenia; the difficulty would arise from precisely the same quarter. Carry the gospel in its power, where would difficulty be anticipated?—from what quarter? From the clergy. At best, they must be conciliated. Go to Egypt amongst the Copts: the same thing just is true. Go to the churches in Palestine, and wherever the Armenian Church is spread, the facts are the same. I do not say, they may not in any case be conciliated; but that the opposition to the truth, when it exists, arises from them. Go to the Greek Church: it is precisely the same. Their Papas, or Priests, the ministers and sustainers of all the corruption and evil of the church, are the great hindrance to all missionary and spiritual exertion. Their churches are fallen; therefore they proportionately estimate the clergy, and they do not the gospel. But the opposers and hinderers, the persons whose influence is dreaded, are the clergy.

Let us look now at the great western body, which is called the church, the Christendom of the world—the vine of the Christian profession. Whence is the difficulty in preaching the gospel? Where is the grand barrier of opposition to Christ in His gospel? It is at once known and felt. The word would be echoed by every one familiar with the subject. But surely we are not to identify the wilful resisters of the truth with those who preach and forward it. In this point they are identified, they are both clergy, they have both precisely the same title; if a Protestant clergyman has title to this, or

whatever title to respect he has, the Roman Catholic priest has the same. I am not talking of mine or any one's estimation of it, but of facts. And this is so much the case that a priest joining the Established church, whatever his motive might be, acquaintance with or ignorance of the truth, would be at once a clergyman of the Establishment. His clerical character existed before and his person merely was transferred from one to the other. Nothing could more clearly mark the identity of the two characters. Their title the same confessedly, the same by the acknowledgment that the title which they insist on distinctively is the same as, and no other than as, it is derived from those whose apostasy and opposition to the truth is the ground of judgment on the vine of the earth, the nominal church of God. If I am bound to acknowledge the one, I am bound to acknowledge the other in the same title and office. They are their own witnesses that there is no difference between them in title as clergymen. Whether the ministry of the priests come from God "their mission" they may determine.

But, that we may let no part of the world escape our notice, turn to Protestant Germany. Who are the hindrances, the bars to the gospel—to truth there finding its way among the people? The clergy. Consult any missionary reports, or Continental reports, or Jewish reports, or a Home Mission Society: and the clergy will be universally found to be the hindrances to the propagation of the truth.

But it will be said, do you mean to class the efforts of the clergy in Ireland with all this? Look at the Home Mission. My most sorrowful answer is, The Home Mission is the fullest and darkest evidence of the truth

of what I argue. Of all things it has shewn the character of clergymen in the darkest colours. For I am not denying or questioning that there may be individual clergymen Christians, but pleading that the notion of a clergyman is great hindrance to truth. So far as the clergy, as individuals, have broken through the trammels of their character and done the things for which they are excommunicated by their own canons, they are blessed and have influence. But the evil clings to them with a tenacity which no circumstances remedy, and which shews the power of darkness working in it, and herein shews so darkly the force of this notion.

A clergyman began, from circumstances it is not necessary here to mention, what is called the Home Mission. The Bishops and other clergy opposed it, as naturally they must, on the principles of the Established Church, though it is hard to say what that is now. The consequence was that, though crowds went to hear the gospel (which I believe they preached very faithfully) at their lips, they stopped.

As clergymen they acquiesced in the barrier which as clergymen others put to the gospel of salvation. Subsequently it was carried on by the instrumentality of laymen, chiefly under the direction of one clergyman who disregarded all the ties which were imposed on him as such. The laymen, of course, were under none. The consequence was, the system became established in spite of the weak resources from which it was, humanly speaking, supplied. But the Lord did not allow it to fail, but the clergy would not work with them; Why? They were clergymen: though they owned them Christians, thought they preached the truth, and most of them thought they ought to preach—but they were not

clergymen. However, being established—in fact as it touched their importance as clergymen that the work of evangelising the country should be carried on entirely by others—the clergy took it up. Would they work with the laymen? No, they were clergymen. They turned them all out to labour alone, to give up God's work, or be stamped with schism where they might. They cared for none of these things so that they preserved their character as clergy; and to such a length was this carried, that on one of the Missions, having sent out two clergymen unfit for the purpose—not consistent men, so that the hearers complained— and foreseeing of course that failure one time would occasion non-attendance the next, they agreed to send an empty car to dismiss the congregations when they could not get a clergyman, rather than associate themselves with godly laymen or allow them even to supply their place as deputies on such a work, counting an empty car a better instrument for God's work than a man full of the Holy Ghost, provided he were not a clergyman. These are the reasons, without enlarging further on them as affecting the general principle, which make me feel that the Home Mission puts the character of clergymen in darker instead of brighter characters. They broke every solemn obligation of diocesan control, and excluded every one else because they were clergymen, simply to preserve their own importance as such, just as they had given up the work of the Mission before on the same account till forced into it. Now if the notion of a clergyman can have such power over godly men, we do but see, in a far stronger light than anything else could put it, the horrible nature of the thing itself, and its influence over the mind. The evil it has produced in forcing schism by rejecting laymen is incalculable, while its influence in

blinding the conscience is almost unintelligible to those who are not involved in it. But the evil seems to me hopeless but in the full recognition that the title and the acknowledgment is a great and horrid sin—the substituting something in the place of God's Spirit which accredits a man, an ungodly man, with the title of rejecting and denying the Holy Ghost, and which therefore impliedly does so, whether in authority or not — not an office, but an order of worldly respect and on which every false religion is founded and its influence proportionate to the darkness in which those subject to it are laying. Any one may see that it is not office, for a man may have no office at all and yet be a clergyman just as much all the time. He may spend all his time shooting or hunting or farming, have no service in the church and yet be just a clergyman, and this is constantly the case. I believe the notion of a clergyman has been the great hindrance to truth in the country. But the effects can, I believe, only be met by the conviction and perception that it is in this dispensation the sin against the Holy Ghost.

One question may remain, why press such a point now? I answer; first, because it is truth. God's truth is always profitable, and the testimony kept up by it in the world. But further, because these things have been brought to such a pass by the prevalency of this very notion that nothing remains but to rescue the saints out of its effects before the tide of Papal power which is founded on it, set in in its full and subduing strength. Men must rest on the Lord or sink into it. If the notion of a clergyman be anything but evil, dissociation from it is but schism and evil. But if the work of the Holy Ghost be not evil, then is that which assumes to condemn it, and

charge evil upon it, most evil of all things; and that is the position in which every clergyman stands by virtue of his title, and which is involved in the very notion of a clergyman: the essence of its name, the sign and distinctive name of apostasy and rebellion against God. I fully believe, if the clergy of this country had acquiesced in laymen's acting with them, or if they would have acted with laymen, all the successional respect which is connected with the name they would have preserved, and prevented any division and difficulty; but they declined this, and declined it because they were laymen, and threw the whole matter, whether men would or not, into the question what is a clergyman? Was the Holy Ghost confined to them? If not, were they doing right in prescribing their own narrow channel to the fulness of refreshing which flowed from Him? And, if not, what are they? in what position are they? and in what putting the dispensation, by thus opposing and vilifying with the name of schism the operations of the Holy Ghost Himself? I believe the name has brought hopeless destruction on the whole dispensation. What is the complaint of a well-known signature, H., in the "Christian Journal"? In seeking the assistance of clergy for the Home Mission the answer continually was—admission of the necessity and evil, but that they were not accountable for it! Why? They were in their post as clergymen. God might have given them the gifts of evangelists. Souls might be, as far as means went, perishing, but they were not accountable, not their brother's keeper, and why? They were established clergymen in their parishes, and they were not accountable for it.

What is the answer of a poor Papist to the efforts of a godly layman (though God I believe is blessing laymen far more amongst them than clergy now)? The clergy of the two religions is enough: what business have these to speak? Who really encourage and sanction this as far as they can? The clergy—thus being the grand barrier to God's truth. Turn which way you will, this is the notion that meets you, as the barrier to God's truth and work, by whomsoever carried on.

And let us for a moment look at what the word means, and we shall very remarkably find the same great characteristic mark of apostasy upon it: the substitution of a privileged order whom man owned for the Church which God owned, and the consequent depression of the Church and the despisal of the Holy Ghost in it, or blasphemy against it. What does clergy mean? It means in scripture the elect body, or rather bodies, of believers, as God's heritage, as contrasted with those who were instructors, or had spiritual oversight over them; and it is used in the place where the apostle warns such against ever assuming the place in which—in much worse than which— the ministers have now put themselves; for they are not merely lords over, but the whole cleroi themselves. The present use of the word is precisely the sign of the substitution of ministers in the place of the Church of God: as men are accustomed to speak of "going into the church." Now, all this is of the essence of apostasy: power attached to ministry, and its becoming the church in the eye of the world, so that the world can save itself the trouble of being religious by throwing it on the clergy, and so the church and the world be all one thing, and irreligious people do for the church as laity, because religion is the clergy's business,

and, if theirs, nobody's (for they do not want it for irreligious laymen); and thus that which has the name of the church, being really the world, serves to exclude and set aside the operations of the Spirit of God in His children as schism and evil; and who is to decide? The church; but they are the world: and will the world ever receive the Spirit of God? It cannot. What then? They hold themselves, of course, the church; they have the clergy, which is God's church in their estimation; and the Spirit of God and His work is voted schismatic. Such is the real and simple meaning of the word clergy so used. But to produce the passage in Scripture—" Be not lords," says Peter, "over God's heritage" to the elders or instructors. That is, over God's Clergy—to give it in its English form of letters, cleroi. The bodies of Christian believers were called God's "lots" (the meaning of the original word cleros) answering to Deuteronomy 9:29. Now the clergy have assumed to themselves to be God's lot only, but the only use of clergy in Scripture is, as applied to the laity if you please, contrasted with ministers: charging these to assume no lordship. Now, the substitution of the clergy for the church is the very moral power of apostasy. But this is contained, indelibly contained, in the very word in its present use, be they Roman Catholics or Protestants: that is, we find the assumption of clericalism, the secret love of many a fair-held name, to be really, in its character and operation, the sin against the Holy Ghost, and the formal character of the apostasy. How often have we heard from the mouth of a minister or clergyman— "My flock," as if it were a virtue, so to think: while it is a shocking blasphemy in fact—I do not say wilfully so—which an apostle would never for a moment have thought of daring to utter or assuming to himself. It was God's flock

which they might be given to oversee—Christ's sheep which they might be entrusted with a portion of, a (cleros) lot, to feed and guide. To call them their sheep, or their flock, was to put themselves in the place of God or His Christ; but they do so because they are clergy: they count it their title as clergy—they would be as gods. Will they say that they are God in the face of them that slay them?

I have the utmost affection and value for many of the individuals among the body designated as clergy; and many doubtless there are unknown to me. But this is not an individual question, but one affecting the divine glory and the whole order of the church; one which is the necessary result of its departure from God, and the form into which that departure was matured and has developed itself; and its present practical result is, that the things by which the Spirit of God would bless the world or them in it is charged, by virtue of this name, with being that of which Satan is the immediate author; and thus the name and title of the body become the concentration of that which, by its denial of the Holy Ghost and gratuitous blasphemy against Him, brings destruction, necessary destruction, on all to which it is attached.

How this came to be so is plain enough, without wearying any one with a parade of learning. The Church had confessedly apostatised, and the structure of the apostasy, that wherein it consisted, remained precisely what it was when the truth came in, with this single difference—that the king took the place of the Pope in the appointment of persons to offices in the church, and the control of its arrangements. The church, originally, sunk gradually into worldliness, until it embraced the

world, and the world became its head. The world could not manage spiritual office: it could manage formal, local authority; it arranged these authorities, and did so. For a length of time, in the prevalence of ignorance and superstition, the nominal offices of the church had more power than secular strength; when this ceased to be the case, civil power reassumed the supremacy, but the structure remained the same: governing, contending, or governed, the same thing remained. The world, in authority, arranged geographical secular power—leaving its influence over superstitious feelings to be what it might—so that it might be an available instrument in its hand to manage the world in its mass, not in Christ's to minister to and guide the church. Whether the Establishment has sufficient of this influence to be of any use to the State, is exactly the question agitated at this moment. But what has the church of God to do with this? I cannot see. It is merely a compound of secular influence and remaining superstition, by virtue of which the church is bound up with the world, and all its real energies cramped. This system, or structure, goes by the name of clergy, whether it be the Pope, or from the Pope down to the lowest curate, who may be entitled, by virtue of it, to hold a place in the world which otherwise he may not have had; or, if a Christian, to labour in some field where his labours may be ill-employed, and his usefulness thrown away; but the church is lost in it. I admit, as fully as any one can do, that many of the clergy are most valuable men. They may have eminent gifts for various offices, which the exigency of the times may require; but the effect of this system, by which they form part of this great worldly structure, is to deprive them of the

opportunity to stir up, or to bar the exercise of, whatever gifts God may have made them partakers of.

The operation of the Reformation was to introduce a statement of individual faith, and to break off, generally, all without the limits of the Roman Empire, from the immediate power of Rome and Popery. It in no way separated the church from the world, but the contrary; and, while it changed the relations, left the principle of the structure just where it was. The King's Arms took the place, in the rood-loft, of the image of Christ. Christ and His Spirit ruled in neither case, save in honour. I verily believe, that the principle of a clergyman, as it is part and parcel of the structure of Popery, will reintroduce the power of Popery as far as the name of religion remains; for as it hangs on the doctrine and principle of succession, not on the presence of the Spirit, there is no ground on which a Protestant minister, as a clergyman, can prove his title, which does not validate the title of the Pope and his followers more even than his own. His happening to have right doctrine does not make him a clergyman; his having false doctrine does not make him not one. The layman or dissenting minister, who holds the same doctrinal truth, is not a clergyman. The popish priest, who conforms to the Church of England, is not ordained to become so: he has that already which makes him a clergyman. Nay, in point of fact, the truth was not preached in the Church of England for the greater period of its distinct existence; and in the vast majority of instances the clergy still do not preach the truth; and the rest of the body would not allow them to be Christians at all.

Is it not manifest that the term clergyman, of such amazing influence on the minds of men, is the distinctive

title of that association which has grown up from the decay of the church, and now forms the common though varied ground of its association with the world, and a hindrance to cramp the operation of God's Spirit; the cementing title of that vine of the earth, which is cast into the wine-press of the wrath of God; and which charges evil upon the operations of the Spirit of God, as rebellion to its authority, not acting within its limits, or in conformity to its secular arrangements and appropriations of service, appropriations of territory formed neither by, nor with reference to, the Church of God at all; and when the Spirit of God operates by individuals within its limits (for God chooses whom He chooses), making them at once schismatics from their brethren, who do not comply with their geography, or acknowledge authority which they pretend to reverence (because it is of the system) but really despise, and violate at the same time all the arrangements, for the sake of which they are rejecting their godly and faithful brethren? If it were not for this term clergy, the link and bond of the great evil of the earth, and of pernicious influence over the minds of men, where would be the occasion of schism, save in that which is ever to be subdued? Or where would be the opportunity to charge the fruits of God's Spirit upon the author of confusion? Or what else is it that consummates the occasion of judgment to the system (of which it has taken the place of the energy and spirit), and always opposed the blessing? Has there, I will ask, ever been an opposition to, and hindrance of, the truths of God, of which the clergy have not been the human authors, and in which they have not been the real and active agents?

The clergy, then, is the specific title which identifies the church and the world, not God and the Church; and as the world necessarily denies, rejects, and will blaspheme the Holy Ghost, because it is the world, and cannot receive it, the tendency of this name is solely to involve the church, corporately, in the same thing, and is to be viewed as the grand evil, the destroying evil, of the day. What is the remedy? The recognition of God's Spirit where it is—personally seeking for that holiness and subjection of spirit which will discern, own, and bow to its guidance and direction, and hail its blessing as the hand of God, wherever it operates, in the measure and way it does so—that other Comforter sent to abide with us, whatever else did, for ever; and working in obedience, that we may possess its joy—boldness, as against all that grieves it, against joining the world, which cannot own or receive it, or denying the truth, of which it is the witness. The Lord give us to discern things that differ, and to separate the precious from the vile.

8 I beg to say here, I do not allude to any modern assumption of the possession of extraordinary spiritual gifts.

9 This is the case in Ireland, where this tract was written.

# Thoughts On The Present Position Of The Home Mission

Editor's Note 10

God is accustomed to act, in His government of mankind, often by ordinary principles, though He be independent of them; that is, He acts upon men by that which ordinarily influences them, the springs of which are in His power. No person can be insensible to the extremely important crisis in which we are now placed in Ireland, and that there are most important agencies at work in the country. The old system is broken up. The demand for the testimony of the gospel is manifest, and, while it is to an extent which surprises even those most accustomed to desultory labour, has forced itself on the consciences of the most reluctant, upon those who have for years resisted anything out of the established track. That which is to be remarked in it, and which shews the hand of God, is the anxiety, on the part of unconverted people, for ministry of the word and opportunities of religious information. It is manifest this must be from God; and I think experience will shew that it is a common accompanying sign of a work of God; as its suitableness is obvious.

It appears to my mind, that the position and worldliness of the church (i.e. the establishment), when the crisis for that purpose came, disqualified it for being an agent of the gospel in the country, and converting it to the faith of God; and in that crisis they, in point of fact, failed. This is matter of history. Further, the system on which it was established disqualified it for such exertions as were alone competent to meet such a crisis. The system

was episcopal and parochial; but the energy which would carry a powerful principle into operation, which forms its agents and cannot find them in the passions of men, cannot be, and never was, parochial. The energy which is competent to work, and because it is competent to work, necessarily overpasses the prescribed limits, and trespasses upon the limits of others, and the system is violated. In the circumstances in which the work of God is placed in this country, this might be proved with stronger reason; but I have purposely confined myself to the general principle. Episcopal and parochial labour, in its sound state, is the supervision of those who have already been brought within the pale of Christian care, as having Christian principles, though it may be accompanied by doing “the work of an evangelist.” Missionary work, in its ordinary sense, assumes a contrary state; that is, the necessity of a general preaching of the gospel, because men are not as yet brought under the influence of Christian principles, and in order, under grace, to their being so brought. The recognition of local episcopal and parochial authority, as such, on the part of the Home Mission, is simply denying its first principle, and destroying itself. It assumes that its objects are not really the subjects of that. It assumes a great deal more; but I am content to rest here for the present.

It has never been carried on, as it never could be, on this principle of episcopal and parochial arrangement. In the detail of practice (which, however, is comparatively immaterial), it would be absolutely prevented from operation in the places where, and, in one sense, where alone, it was really wanted.

I will suppose a diocese where the Home Mission is refused admittance. What is the assumption of the Home Mission? that the state of the diocese is perfect, and does not need its care? Is it not rather, at bottom, that there is the special want of the energy of Christian principle, connected with the sense of the deep necessity of the people, which missionary zeal supposes; that is, a state of things which specially calls for the agency which they are assuming to themselves. If they acknowledge the episcopal and parochial system, it is the only place where they cannot act. In a word, the Home Mission has its existence because the episcopal and parochial system, as at present established, fails for the Christian purposes of the country. It acts, and must act, in defiance of the system which confines the labour of the minister within an allotted sphere, and subjects him to the authority of the bishop 6f the diocese, within which that sphere is situated. It is, in a word, a set of individuals acting on their own authority, if they be right, in undoubted obedience to God—but their own as regards men—in going or sending others to preach and admonish, without reference to the authority of the nominal system into which the country is divided.

Their duty to God in this is admitted; and the admission of the episcopal and parochial system in such a work becomes a dereliction of their duty to God in subservience to men. I do not mean the territorial division, though that will be found to fall before it, but the principle of the system.

Another most important principle developed by the Home Mission is this, that men have their place and agency in the system and the country by virtue, not of their official situations, but of the gifts which God has

given them. This is a most important principle in the difference between Babylon and the divine economy. The vehicle of the office may be used as at present, but the principle on which the Missions proceed, and by which, as thus volunteering, they will be judged, is the competency of the individuals, the gifts of God's Spirit which they may have.

There is another point at present of importance. The clergy have taken up the Missions at present. They have taken them up to the exclusion of laymen: their conduct has been marked in this respect. The Missions had been carried on, and were established, through the labours of laymen, while the clergy in a great measure refused to act because it was irregular. I believe those most conversant in them will admit that they could not, in point of fact, have been carried on without. The effect of this exclusion I am not concerned to state now; for I believe the results of what is going on are but in their infancy: but it has this immediate effect. During the working of the laymen, it was merely an unofficial preaching of the Gospel, as God gave men ability where there was necessity and God gave opportunity; and, clergymen being engaged in it too, it merely became a common work of necessity and love. Now that the clergy have excluded them, it becomes a deliberate rejection by them, the clergy, in their official character, of the control of the diocesan over his own diocese; its management in the spiritual energies of Christianity is assumed by other hands. The clergy themselves are setting aside the episcopal constitution, as at present subsisting, and acting not only in independence but in defiance of it. The fact is, the system, as it stands at present, is extinct. I do not mean by this that episcopacy

is therefore extinct; but that the authority and control of the present system is gone. The clergy have taken upon themselves the exclusive responsibility of acting in defiance of it. They cannot go back. They have been thrust forward, by the demand which has been raised of God for efficient ministry, to act in defiance of that system. They are now thrown upon this: either to work on in spite of the episcopal parochial system, though using it where it may favour them, and to treat it as non-existent or hostile; or to throw up the character of being the ministry of the country. I regret that there was not sufficient of God's Spirit among them to own the labours of the laymen, who had in many instances gone before them. I sorrow for it for their own sakes; but I rejoice that they have made themselves the practical actors, in defiance of an authority whose sanction for so acting they would have others seek.

That laymen, as they are called, should have been recognised by the churches as devoted to the work, may be in given instances unobjectionable or desirable; but why they should seek the sanction of an authority in order to preach in defiance or violation of that authority, and for the purpose of doing so, the clergy may but I cannot explain. If they do not purpose to violate it, they are subjecting themselves to the restraint of an authority, the operation of which has been the occasion of the necessity of their so preaching at all; and this, if the responsibility is on them to preach, it is wickedness to do. The clergy, as if they had the residue of the Spirit, are acting themselves in defiance of the authority of the bishops— honourably, no doubt, if they have hindered the preaching of the gospel. That is, they have determined to carry, or are carrying, the Mission

through the various parts of Ireland, without reference to, or in spite of, the prohibition of various bishops. But they will not hear of a person, not ordained by those bishops, preaching, or being allowed to go on the Mission. Now I do not see the consistency of receiving authority, or licence to preach, from a bishop, with the view of exercising that privilege in defiance of the authority which gave it. I trust there are many laymen too honest to act so: but one cannot be insensible to the effects, that the clergy, while thus excluding them (unless they can claim for themselves the whole residue of the Spirit), are necessarily raising up a system of dissent—the greatest evil which, I believe, could now affect Ireland. I do not mean dissent from a set of formularies, but the schism, or dissent, in result, of one part of the Christians in the country from the other at a time when God is strongly working in the country. This is the guilt which will be on the heads of the clergy, if they are not careful in their conduct.

If, on the other hand, this anomalous body of the Home Mission refrain from those places where the ordinary authorities forbid them, it is plain their assumption of the evangelisation of the country is in result an idle pretence, and schism is yet more sure. It is quite clear that laymen whom God may call to the office of preaching, as they will not be permitted so, cannot righteously act with such a system; nor will men easily understand the righteousness of a self-instituted body, which, while it assumes to be everything, fails in the most important part of its work, whilst it discredits everything else which God accredits. In fact, I can conceive of nothing more wicked than discrediting, as far as they can, the preaching of laymen and then

stopping short from the work of God for fear they should be discredited themselves. Nor can laymen, if they be either righteous or wise, fill up such a gap; that is, with any set purpose. They must do it, either as sanctioning the unrighteousness of the clergy, who perhaps might wish to be done by others what they would not do themselves, or else it must be done in the spirit of an opposition system, which, if the wilfulness of the clergy leave it possible, is altogether to be deprecated. I do trust, as at present constituted, the laymen will hold themselves altogether aloof from the Home Mission. If it act in despite of the bishops, it is acting unrighteously as being made up exclusively of clergy; if it desist wherever the bishops or clergy oppose, it is disgraceful to assume the authority it does. And it becomes clear that the laymen had better employ themselves distinctly without those trammels; and let the clergy of the Home Mission employ themselves in their local circles, building again the things they destroy. In any case, the essential character which the Home Mission has assumed in its clerical shape is schism—acting independently of the bishops, whom it professes to recognise, when they let it pass; and respecting them only when they are doing wrong, in their judgment; and despising and excluding the laity, who may be led of God's Spirit, where they think they are doing right.

But further, it is beyond all controversy that the Bishops have been opposing and oppose the preaching of the gospel out of the system of parochial arrangements. It is equally clear that the efficient agency of the testimony of the word is now carried on on a system independent of, and consequently acting in opposition to, or neglect of, their authority. Of this the clergy have made

themselves the exclusive instruments— how righteously others must judge. It is equally clear that, assuming this ministry to be successful, where sufficient local pastorship does not exist, or where the enquiries and spiritual anxieties raised by the reception of the word have cultivated the sense of a necessity for communion which is not met by any existing local provision, the necessity of pastoral care provided by the Mission, and the probable formation of local bodies in whatever shape, at once arises. Hence, we have, either the pastoral care of the Mission districts assumed by the Mission as a necessary obligation, or else the formation of local bodies on principles not contemplated by it at all. The assumption of this pastoral care, further, definitely shews the importance of the position assumed by the members of the Home Mission, and at once shews the total impossibility of its being carried on in subservience to, or consideration of, the subsisting episcopal and parochial arrangements. It is possible that some of its members may think it right to have the sheep of Christ under those who are not really pastors. They may think so; but, to say the least, they will find few to agree with them. But if not, being clergymen tied to a system, they must be as insufficient for the pastoral care as for the evangelical work, if obedient to the system they profess to maintain; or else, while they have rejected the laymen as irregular, prove that it was merely to be more irregular themselves, and assume all the power into their own hands. And, the fact is, very abundant signs have been afforded of such a design on the part of those who call themselves by the odd name of the Subordinate Clergy. I cannot believe this, or anything of the kind, to be of God. That the bishops should stop the course of this testimony is impossible;

that they should do it no Christian, who feels the present necessity, could wish. The utmost they could do would be to throw it into others hands in the shape of opposition to the Church, and probably to drive many godly men out of their system. The duty of faithful ministers of the gospel to undertake it, and carry it on, is an obligation which directly flows from their being ministers of the gospel. “To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin” —a duty which may be strengthened, but never can be weakened by the fact of an ungodly man hindering, so that that hindrance should be reckoned a reason for not attempting it. If men were honest they would see the incompatibility of avowedly maintaining an existing system, and assuming a part which, if carried into effect, must make a breach, and in point of fact, does make a breach in that system every step that is effectually taken. But their present position is that they have preferred associations with ungodly pastors who oppose them to associations with godly laymen, the members of Christ, though these laymen were to act simply the part they were acting themselves, and that, indeed, in subservience to them, and unobjectionably as regards their superiors.

I will add, the desire for preaching is by no means the only characteristic of the present day. There are two others equally marked. And they are the desire, the appetite for scriptural information; and the desire amongst Christians for that which is little or not at all found in existing systems, and that is, communion with one another. The extent of the latter is, of course more confined, but not less decided; and, perhaps, its operation more remarkable. Further, I might add, that the necessity for discipline is growingly felt amongst all

those who are exercised in Christian service, whether clergy or laity. In scriptural information the laity, and those who sit loose to the system, are by no means behind the clergy. If I were to draw a comparison, I should say they were rather before them in it. It is by no means the whole of Christianity to have extensive scriptural information. But the desire for it exists, and, I repeat, those conversant with the state of things in Ireland will by no means find the clergy the most informed in Scripture. In saying this, I beg most anxiously to be understood not to desire (God forbid that I should) to depreciate what God's Spirit has done in, and given to, the clergy. I believe God has in many instances much blessed them, looking at them individually. But, in point of fact, it is apparent to many that their extent of scriptural information is by no means such as to make them exclusively the instructors of the laity (if they force the line to be drawn, though I trust the laymen would ever recognise whatever God's Spirit had given to any, and be ready to learn from any), nor to meet the demand for scriptural information which exists, and which, though liable to abuse, like everything else, is surely of God, and the abuse of which can only be met by greater scriptural depth and knowledge.

As to the other point, less extensively and openly developed, scarcely less so indeed now, but equally really existing, and a more powerful principle than any by far, and that is, the desire of the saints for communion, it is obvious that the clergy must be greatly hindered in meeting any such desire. The position in which the laity stand with them is merely as recipients, that is, as clergy and laity. It is obvious that this position, which may have its value in its place, does not meet the

desire for communion. These things, moreover, are recognised in the Scriptures, and those scriptures form a warrant in which the mind may rest, perhaps not always wisely in looking for them; and God, having left the record of them there, has proved His will that they should be the order of blessing.

But the clergy have excluded the laity from the office of preaching, that is, they will not preach with them. In the claim of communion and fellowship, which will be found to militate strongly against their official position, the laity, of course, will bear the largest though not the exclusive share; for it is a desire and a principle felt or recognised by many of the clergy. In acquaintance with the Scriptures, as we have said, there is as great an appetite, and, as I have remarked, I believe as much progress, at the least, made by them as by the clergy. As to preaching, the laity have long been occupied with it, and in many instances as successfully at least as any of the clergy. I despise no solemn designation, if the church be competent to it, to any office. But I hold that the Scriptures recognise the laity, if they are to be so called, preaching, and that the Lord was with them in it. And I think the clergy would have very great difficulty in shewing from Scripture any appointment or ordination to such preaching as is contemplated in missionary labour.

“They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word”; and those who were scattered abroad were all except the apostles. “And the hand of the Lord,” we are told, “was with them, and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord.” I am not, here, one way or other, discussing the value of episcopal ordination; but I regret the unseasonable effort of many

to exclude those whose labours Scripture distinctly recognises, and necessarily thereby to induce schism in the church.

One great- evil hitherto has been the dissociation of nominal office from the power of the Spirit. This is denied by no spiritual person. The Spirit has been poured out11 in efficient service on many not officially employed. The clergy are setting themselves to exclude these: they are standing on office against the title and competency to act of those who have the Spirit without office; and this in a service in which they are acting in defiance or disregard of the office and authority of those from whom all their own official distinction flows. For, if not so acting, the official distinction is simply a direct hindrance, so far disqualifying them or the office they have exclusively assumed to themselves. And in thus standing on office against the operation of the Spirit, where there is not nominal office, they identify themselves with ungodliness, refusing to associate themselves with godly men in works, which the majority of them think they are entitled to undertake with godly men, who are working with God's Spirit. This is an ominous position in which to put the name and character of the clergy.

Let us put a case: here is a parish, in which a person, not sent of God, is, in office, pastor or clergyman; a person whom God has qualified for the service, and called, is there, or goes there, and he works. He cannot be in the office owned by man, because he, who has been put in by those men whom the Home Mission recognise as having authority there, is already in the office. He whom God has sent is irregular: he who, deriving from human authority, excludes the person

whom God has sent, is regular. The business of the Home Mission, in its present form, is to meet the case of this ungodly man; but they own him, giving up the place, and disown the layman, who is excluded from office by virtue of the system they uphold, but is acting in the energy of the Spirit virtually in it, to meet the difficulty which the ungodliness of the system has raised. The question has been raised; they have raised it between office and energy; that is, between the most ungodly thing in the world, and the rejected and grieved Spirit; and, as far as they can go in this act, they have associated with the ungodly pastor and rejected the Spirit. If they say, Why not take office? he cannot; first, because some one is in it already; and next, because they have so vitiated the source, that many conscientious men cannot, whatever the clergy may do, identify themselves with it. Under these circumstances, they forcibly draw the question into light; by discrediting the layman as much as possible, who is doing the work of God by His Spirit as well as he can—the work they are doing themselves—and by accrediting the office in the ungodly shape in which it thus presents itself.

We put another case, one not so uncommon. A large tract of country is destitute of the gospel. A layman goes, preaches there, and is blessed—gathers out of darkness into light many souls. The district is already full of clergy, who are not shepherds. What is the layman to do? leave them for Socinians or enthusiasts to catch, or unheeded altogether? There is no godly righteousness in this. But the man is made, if he be faithful, a schismatic in spite of himself by a system which sanctions, or has sanctioned, the idle shepherds by

whom he is surrounded. Which would the Home Mission recognise? It would recognise those idle shepherds, and it would not recognise the faithful man of God. But it has placed itself in a position in which it must be wrong either way; for if it did not own those shepherds, it would be acting in dereliction of its own responsibilities as churchmen; and the truth is, that, while they assume to be lords over God's heritage, or, as the original is, over God's clergy, they are in a position in which, though individually blessed in preaching, they must act unrighteously. They have assumed evangelism, and, obeying the prohibitions of the bishops and clergy, they turn aside from the most important points of their duty. They are clergy, and, persisting against these prohibitions, they are acting unrighteously, and in disobedience, in inconsistency with the character they are specifically assuming to maintain; while they reject the laymen, who, if it was right for them to preach at all, were violating no authority, breaking through no prescribed limits. Own the Spirit, and there was no unrighteousness, but blessing. Hold by the office distinctively, and they are inconsistent and irregular, or inefficient. Personal duty they might have pleaded: official regularity it is monstrous to allege.

There is in nothing human such a concatenation of liberty and authority, as the work of God exhibits—by individual competency and general subjection, all flowing from the presence and work of the Spirit. The contrast of these things, which God had so harmonisedly blended—of the office and the Spirit—has made the office dead and imperious (a missionary acts by the Spirit, not by office), and puts the actings of the Spirit out of the association of subjection, unless by individual

wisdom, and has done more to disunite than any other possible step. But there are those, I trust, of larger hearts and more anxious thoughts, than those who would exclude others by their official dignity; and who will recognise that which is of God, though despising12 themselves, with more liberty and faithfulness than some who would pull down the restraint of offices in their own estimation higher, that they might have liberty for themselves, but hold to the importance of their own, and deny that liberty to those they count below them. But we are told that the Church will be reformed. But what is that reform they ostentatiously speak of? Simply human arrangements—the assumption of power of the visible Church into their own hands. It is not a reference to the Spirit; it is not a call to prayer; it is not a looking to the Holy Ghost, however we may have grieved it, to set Christ's house in order; but a petition to the State, that it may throw them off, confessing they are controlled by and under its authority, and still dependent upon its choice whether they should be or not; not as a question of their sin and righteousness: declaring the evil, but sanctioning in principle its continuance. If they are bound to Christ, why look to the State to free them, unless they love it still? Why not act on the principle of separation, as responsible to Him?

Proposing next that they should have the election of bishops themselves, willing, perhaps, some of them, to divide it with the Crown, by naming three, that the Crown may choose one, thereby thrusting out the principle of the Spirit's guidance, while they assume control to themselves. Proposing that each diocese should meet, arrange each its own plans, and then bring them together to a common meeting, to settle how it

should be. Settle for whom? The Crown, laity, Christians, and all: the holding of the present bishops made untenable, and their own created ones uncertain! Such would be the result of their plans differing in various circumstances, but all having this character of throwing the elective power into their own hands, as those capable of managing it, and excluding others, save as coalescing with them, but none of them referring or looking to the presence, power, and operation of the Spirit of God. Let any one only examine the plans of church reform, which have been circulated from time to time latterly, in Cork, in the “Christian Journal,” in Dublin, and see if they are not all of the character I have stated; if they are not all based upon the proposed competency of those who are included in them, and, not caring for others, not referring it to the Holy Ghost as the only competent Spirit of energy to the church; and, in fact, resulting in the assumption of power, by those who hold the middle offices of the Established church, and nothing else: a mere human plan and arrangement.

And the clergy and Home Mission are greatly mistaken if they think that it is only laymen or disinterested persons who feel these things. Many of the most spiritual and upright of the clergy, as well as some of those called high churchmen, are just as decided on the point. They may be individually better than their superiors; but I do not see what great liberty of the Spirit or comfort of the faith there would be. I do not see the righteousness of the effort on the part of the “subordinate clergy.”

The Spirit of God is at work in the country. The clergy feel that there has been long a hindrance in the higher

offices of the established system, and in the lower in association with them.

This Spirit shews itself, as so working, in three great channels: the necessity of preaching, the desire for scriptural information, and the desire for fellowship and communion.

The attempt to confine it to the middle officers of the church, who yet throw aside the upper, is futile, a resisting of the Spirit of God, a Babel work. It is working in other channels; and those who hold the middle offices are acting by virtue of those principles which would throw down their own exclusiveness of system. Pride is shewn in non-subjection to the Spirit, which is God acting whether in office or in testimony.

It is a comfort, at any rate, to laymen that, while their ministry was simply of willing unpretending service, of spiritual service in either case, the missionary ministry of the clergy is in despite of the authority of those whom they recognise as having it; and the trying and odious though necessary office of resisting that authority has been assumed by those who have been so long strenuously maintaining it, and the laity are free.

While the clergy were content, the laymen acted (I rejoice that they did) as willing and unpretending assistants to those who had the service for them to do, as well as preached by themselves. There was no jealousy of the clergy. They owned the gift that was in them, men from habit disposed to count them their superiors, more practised, and those around them accustomed for the most part to honour the office, so that they came in but as assistants; though the opportunity was given for the exercise of their gifts, so

that there should be no schism in the body. The work would have been one. The clergy have thought right to reject them and disown their gifts. In them the evil that results must now rest.

I will add here a very few remarks on a subject connected with this, though not nominally yet immediately in the practical question, as all who are conversant in the working of principles in the country must know. Attention has been frequently drawn to changes in the liturgy. The effort, I am convinced, is a mistake. Any objection to the liturgy is not, in the mass of Christian people who feel it, from cavils at particular objectionable circumstances in it. It is, though there are many things doubtless which offend the knowledge or distress the consciences of many children of God, a much deeper principle; the desire of communion—not objecting to the liturgy, but the want of a communion in something flowing from the Spirit of God present and acting among those engaged in such common service.

It is a mistake in the origin of distaste for the liturgy, in the great body of those who throw it up now, to suppose that it would be in the slightest degree affected by any particular changes in its structure. I do confess that I doubt whether there be in the church a competency to make any beneficial change. I believe the notion of what a church is to be very much lower than at the time the present prayer-book was compiled. I doubt that there is equal piety in the church; and I am sure too, it would be opening the door to alterations whose sole object was to pander to the infidelity of the day. But that which is now working is the desire of something else, a desire shewing itself in other ways than that. Men who do not feel this are mostly content with the liturgy as it is. They

like it. They are used to it. A few of the clergy may be glad of change in services which affect them particularly, but the change will be unperceived by the mass of churchgoers, while their reverence for it will be gone. As to the others it will merely come to the mind as evidence that those who have made the change do not understand the real thing they seek. Such a change will be wholly short of the principle which is at work upon the subject. On the whole the great point is that the Spirit of God is at work. It is the presence and power of the Spirit which will have power: and the only wisdom of the believer is such a recognition of the Spirit—wherever and however it is working in the service of God and the gospel, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and evidencing therein love to Him, His gospel, God and His grace, more than to anything else, as shall not raise questions which all the wisdom of the clergy in Ireland never could answer, but, on the contrary, will enable them to resist (and be borne out by God in it, because by integrity of purpose they shall be enabled to detect and be justified in resisting) that which is the will of the flesh, and not the unity of grace and the Spirit. The clergy have refused so to recognise it in the laity. Let the layman, as I would beseech them in the Lord's name—no man ever lost in God's work anything by humbling himself, or dealing gently with a brother —be wiser. Let them own whatever of God's Spirit there is in the clergy, and let the rest pass. The clergy may feel assured that these are times in which he who acts with the simplest purpose, and with most of the Spirit, will in result carry the work of God with him; for it is a day in which God is separating realities from forms, as that which can alone stand the universal dislocation which every institution is undergoing, and which the Spirit of God shall and can

alone go through unscathed, and those that are led by it unmarred and unhurt.

To resume the whole. The Spirit of God is poured out13 on laymen and on the clergy. The clergy, by virtue of their office, exclude laymen from any portion of the work which they are carrying on, while their work at the same time sets aside episcopal control. What can we think of this? It is not the first time that the clergy have sought to confine, to their own narrow channels, the working of the Spirit of God, and so grieved and hindered the work. And, since they have thus raised the question, What is a clergyman? there are fifty-six persons ordained at once, as we have known instances. For what? Elders? No, not one probably of the number having any one qualification for the office. Indeed, though God may raise them up, in the arrangements of the church (that is, the Establishment), there could not be any such thing as ordinary elders, nor is there indeed of deacons, in the scriptural sense of the word. No. What then? All alike are ordained. Some, perhaps, ungodly men, it may be, without any call into the church of God at all, not Christians—whose only office is to make it wrong for any one who has the Spirit to work where they are at all; some godly men, and so to be honoured, but who have no gift for any special office; others who, we will suppose, may be eminently gifted as evangelists, but who, very likely, are sent where there is no opportunity for the exercise of their gift at all, or subject to one who would restrain it. But all are alike and equally clergymen. And what is that, then? What office is it in the church? The great secret of wisdom, in such a time as this, nay, always, is to recognise the Spirit, by its moral evidence, wherever it is found—office, practically

when you can. This will set aside the semblance of the flesh, take away its false claim of liberty, and give might to the controlling power of the Spirit, as well as liberty to its energy.

The spiritual clergy are conscious that resistance of nominal office to the Spirit of God is a sin; that it is their duty to act in spite of it. They act by their spirituality, not by their official character. Ought not laymen to do the same? If they say, Let them; then are they the willing authors of schism, maintaining, within a certain limit, their own importance. This is the thing to be dreaded. The authority of the bishops they cannot set up; they neglect it. They know that they are a hindrance; their estimate of them is that they are a difficulty to be got over. And what do we see? A minister of state, a layman —God forbid that I should justify the act—saying that he has anxiously considered the necessities of the Irish Church, and he thinks that it can spare twelve bishops. Is it not ridiculous to talk after this of the importance and necessity, the heavenly-derived character of episcopal control? I speak of it as it at present exists. If the Irish bishops had immediately consecrated bishops to the vacant sees, then one might have marvelled at the coolness of the wrong, but the system would have been, so far, however inconsistent, morally if not secularly independent. But they have not done so: and what can we think? I cannot say what I think. They are not in power and strength; and if God has laid His hand upon them, I will not now lay mine. This fact is the evidence, not the principle, of their system; and if they are in sorrow by it, one need not meddle with them there. The clergy may take occasion, by their depression, to set themselves up, perhaps to coin new rivals, and discredit

their old masters; but do they think there are none who can judge them in this? I speak not of them all. But I repeat it, I rejoice that the conflict with authority is exclusively assumed by the clergy. Be it the laymen's part to keep clear, to obey what they own, and to act for the Lord as God shall give them opportunity.

Let the clergy do their duty in the work of the Mission, if the Lord lead them to it; but certainly they are doing it in the way most obnoxious to the authority set over them on one side, and carefully rejecting the work of the Spirit in others, upon the assumption of their office, whereby alone they can act effectually the part they are assuming exclusively to themselves. I pray God they may not so grieve the Spirit as to drive Him away, as they have often done before. I persuade myself fully they cannot now; yea, they shall not. There is one only remedy for their conduct, that I know; and that is not minding it. While, as I trust, every layman will fully honour whatever the Lord has given them of His Spirit, be it pastoral or evangelical, in practical authority, or in witness of the truth; for surely shall His offices for the church be brought out in substance for the profit of the church. I could add much more, as to the special circumstances of the country, both of present good, and probable evil; but I refrain. May the Lord pour down His Spirit14 abundantly in this country, to bring out the good in the holy order, that shall give all His people just refreshing, and perfect them for that which it is His portion to give them, and give it them for His name and glory's sake, with their blessing; and to Him shall be all the glory.

[I have been struck with this paper as applicable to the present time, as many an one will see. The result of the

course the clergy took at that time, through the intervention of Mr. Frederick Fitzwilliam Trench, was that the Home Mission came to an end. When I recently answered his pamphlet, I had totally forgotten the existence of this paper. Thirty-three years have not altered the principles it contains, though it has ripened many an one then at work, and I may detect some inaccuracies of expression. I have not altered a word in the tract, save two which were merely grammatical errors or errors of the press.]

10 Dublin, 1833.

11 This expression I should not now use; but I prefer leaving the tract as it is, as a memorial of what was passing more than thirty years ago, and has so much stronger an application now. Certainly moderation was not wanting.

12 That is, I apprehend, owning the Mission-work of the clergy, though these, by reason of their official position, despise them.

13 I again notice this traditional expression which is incorrect. The Spirit of God works especially in given times and places; it was poured out at Pentecost.

14 See previous notes.

## Christian Liberty Of Preaching And Teaching The Lord Jesus Christ

“They that were scattered abroad went everywhere, preaching the word.”—Acts 8:4.

That “the word of the Lord may have free course,” is a matter which few will deny to be of ultimate concern to the glory of God, though it be one which has in many ways been let and hindered by human perverseness: and in nothing more than by confining the preaching of the gospel within arbitrary limits of place and person, prescribed by man, but sanctioned in no way by Scripture. To a single mind which has known the value of God’s love, and which views things in the light in which they are put by that blessed knowledge, it would not seem that, in the midst of a world lying under condemnation, yet visited by this love, aught beyond spiritual qualification was needed for any one to declare, to those whom he sees around him ready to perish, the remedy, namely, that Jesus has died for sinners. Man has been pleased to set up restrictions; but the point with the disciple is to know whether the Lord has done so, and what is the warrant for precluding any from full liberty of preaching to whom He has given His Spirit for the purpose: seeing that, if it has been so given, there is infinite loss in the hindrance, and the Spirit of God is grieved. The same faithfulness to Christ, which will yield unqualified obedience to every jot and every tittle of His commands, will also lead us to search out every hindrance to His service, in order to its removal from ourselves or others. The present question is one of deep importance; for it is evident that, if the restrictions be

not verily and indeed ordered by the Lord Himself or by His apostles, it comes to this, that in upholding them, on the one hand, there is a loss of much comfort and edification to the church by confining to the ministry of the one that which should flow from the Spirit in many; and, on the other, the gospel which was “to be preached to every creature “under heaven, is bound and fettered, and multitudes are shut out from the springs of life for want of the invitation which should be upon the lips of all, who themselves have drunk of the living waters.

The point to be proved, by those who were opposed to the unrestricted preaching of the word, is this—either, that none who are not in prescribed office have the Spirit of God in testimony, or that, having it, the sanction of man is necessary for its exercise. I do not purpose here a general investigation of the principles of the subject, but merely to inquire whether any of the church of God are not entitled to preach if the Lord give them opportunity, or whether there be any human sanction needful for their doing so. The following considerations are intended, by the Lord’s help, to maintain that it is not needed; and that no such sanction can be proved to be necessary from Scripture; and that no such sanction was therein afforded. The question is, not whether all Christians are individually qualified, but whether they are disqualified unless they are—what is commonly called—ordained.15 I say commonly, because the word as used in Scripture, does not in the original convey what it does to an English ear at present. I affirm that no such ordination was a qualification to preach in the days of scriptural statement. I do not despise order; I do not despise pastoral care, but love it where it really exists, as that which savours, in its place, of the sweetest of

God’s services: seeing that, though it may be exercised sometimes in a manner not to our present taste or thought, a good shepherd will seek the scattered sheep. But I confine myself to a simple question—the assertion that none of the Lord’s people ought to preach without episcopal or other analogous appointment. The thing here maintained in few words is, that they are entitled. The scripture proves that they did so; that they were justified in doing so, God blessing them therein; and that the principles of Scripture require it, assuming, of course, here that they are qualified by God. For the question here is not competency to act, but title to act if competent. Neither do I despise herein (God forbid that I should do so) the holy setting apart, according to godliness, to any office, such as are competent, by those who have authority to do so. But this is entirely another question.

Let us then try the question by the light which the word affords upon the subject. There are only two cases upon which the question can arise—namely, as to speaking in the church, or out of the church: amongst the “congregation of faithful men” for their common profit and building up in the faith; or as evangelists declaring to the world, wheresoever God may direct them, the message of that “grace which has appeared unto all men.” If these are admitted, all anomalous cases will be readily agreed in.

First, then, as to the speaking of Christians in the church. And here I remark that the directions in 1 Corinthians 14 are entirely inconsistent with the necessity of ordination to speak. There is a line drawn there, but it is not between ordained or unordained. “Let your women keep silence in the churches”; a direction

which never could have place, were the speaking confined to a definitely ordained person, but takes quite another ground; and which implies directly, not that it is right for every man to speak, but that there is preclusion of none, because of their not being in any stated office. Women were the precluded class; there the line was drawn. If men had not the gift of speaking, of course they would be silent, if they followed the directions there given. The apostle says, “every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation.” Does he then say none ought to speak but one ordained? No. “Let all things be done unto edifying.” That is the grand secret, the grand rule: in a tongue, by two or at the most by three, and by course, and interpret; prophets, let them speak two or three, etc. “For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted…” “for God …” etc. “Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience.” We have, then, distinction, not of ordained and unordained, but of those, who from their character—women— are not permitted to speak, and the rest are; being also directed in what order to do so, and the ground of distinction stated. And this is God’s plan of decency and order.

For the rest, they were all to speak, that all might learn, and all be comforted. Not all to speak at once, not all to speak every day, but all as God led them, according to the order there laid down, and as God was pleased to give them ability for the edifying of the church. I apply all this simply and exclusively to the question of Christians in general, having God’s Spirit, using their respective gifts; and I assert that there was no such

principle recognised as that they should not, but the contrary.

It may and will be said by many, that these were the times of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. But the Spirit of God does not justify breaking through His own order by systematic rules: it would be most mischievous to say that He did. But the case, let it be observed, was not one of the prerogative of spiritual gifts, but of order; for women had spiritual gifts, as we read elsewhere, and directions are given for their exercise; but they were not to use them in the church, because it was out of order—not comely. At the same time there was no hint that any or all the men were not, but the contrary, because it was not out of order. Aptness to teach may be a very important qualification for a bishop, but it cannot be said, from scripture, to be disorderly for any member of the body to speak in the church, if God had given him ability. Besides, though these extraordinary gifts may have ceased, I by no means admit that the ordinary gifts of believers, for the edification of the church, have ceased. On the contrary, I believe they are the instruments, the only real instruments of edification; nor do I see why, on principle, they should not be exercised in the church, or why the church has not a title to the edification derived from them. If the presence of the indwelling Spirit be in the church, it has that which renders it substantially competent to its own edification, and to worship God “in spirit and in truth.” If it be not there, nothing else can be recognised, and it is a church no longer; for no makeshift is warranted by Scripture in default of the original constitutive character and endowments of a dispensation.

But in thus upholding the common title of the saints, it may be supposed by some that the argument will be at once met by referring to the orderly way in which Christ originally gave in His church, “some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, pastors and teachers,” etc. Now, unless one man centres all these offices in one person, by virtue of ordination, the objection will not apply, but on the contrary brings its own refutation. For we read, some had one service, some another—the head, Christ, “from whom the whole body, fitly framed together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” We read also that the members are set in the body, one the eye, the other the foot, the other the ear, that there “might be no schism in the body.”

And it is a thought which might well commend itself to our minds, that if we have indeed lost many and ornamental members, it is no reason why we should summarily cut off the rest—the word of wisdom or the word of knowledge, and the like, of which there is assuredly some measure yet remaining in the church. But if the attempt should be made to close the enquiry, by silencing all discussion with the startling assertion that it is useless, for the Spirit of God is utterly and altogether gone out of the Church; it at once brings on the question, If so, what are we, and where are we? The church of God without the Spirit? Verily, if He be not there, all union between Christ and His members is cut off, and the promise, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,” is of none effect.16 But the word of God shall stand. “The world indeed cannot receive the

Spirit of truth, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him," but let the disciples of Jesus know that He is with them; and that "wheresoever two or three are gathered together in his name," He is in their midst, His Spirit is with them for instruction and blessing. Is this correct?

Thus far then, as to the first case of speaking in the church. I advocate no system. I mourn over the departure of many of the comely parts or part, however, on which God set comeliness. These passages of the word I take as scriptural evidence that the confining of the edification of the church to nominal office alone has not the Scriptures to rest upon. I speak not here of elders, or their value, or the contrary; observing only that grace and scriptural qualities alone should be our standard of valuation; and that, in the arrangements of the Holy Ghost, it is only the gift of God which gives any title to service in the church, or to its claims; nominal office merely, as such, having no claim upon any one. I speak merely of the one point—the wrongness of a Christian speaking in the church as such. One point, and that a most important one, in this part of the subject remains to be noticed. If we are reminded of the dangers arising from all teaching, it is admitted at once; for it is evident that here, if anywhere, mischief would spring up. But looking to Scripture, we are warned against it, not upon the ground of its being wrong as regards office, not because of its effect merely on others, but warning against it is given, as being one of the things in which, as evil will more or less have a tendency to shew itself, so the remedy is applied to the spirit from whence it flows. "My brethren, be not many teachers, for so shall ye heap to yourselves greater

condemnation." But again, the warning itself shews that there was no such restriction of office as is now supposed, for thus it would have been—you have no business to preach at all, for you are not ordained. But no, the correction was turned to moral profit, not to formal distinction of pre-eminent office.

But the question becomes more important when considered in the second case, namely, as to speaking out of the church, because it forbids the preaching of the gospel by a vast number of persons who may have faithfully borne it to others. Let us inquire into the scriptural facts. In the first place, then, all the Christians preached. "They that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4); and those who were scattered were all, except the apostles. Some critics have endeavoured to elude this plain passage, by saying that it is only speaking, which one not in office may do. But a reference to the original at once disproves the assertion. It is "evangelising the word": and we read elsewhere that "the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord," Acts 11:19-21. Now, unless all the church were ordained (I think they are, to preach as far as they have ability), here is the simplest case possible, the case in point. The first general preaching of the gospel which the Lord blest beyond the walls of Jerusalem knew no distinction between ordained and unordained. It had not entered into their minds then, that they who knew the glory of Christ were not to speak of it, where and how God enabled them. "And the hand of the Lord was with them." Paul preached without any other mission than seeing the glory of the Lord and His word—in a synagogue, too—and boasts of it.17 And he gives his

reason for Christians preaching elsewhere—" as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak," 2 Cor. 4. Apollos preached; "he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord; and of him it is said that, when Paul would have sent him from Ephesus to Corinth, he would not go. Yet, so far from being ordained before beginning to preach, he knew only the baptism of John. And Aquila and Priscilla "took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." And then, continuing his labours as before, "he helped them much which had believed"; and "mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." Again, at Rome, many of the brethren, waxing bold by Paul's bonds, preached the word without fear. And here let it be added, for the sake of those who have doubts, respecting the passage, that the Greek word is 'heralds'; which shews the character of the work. The same habits of wandering preaching we find in the second and third epistles of John guarded, not by ordination, but by doctrine. Nor in truth, is there such a thing mentioned in Scripture, as ordaining to preach the gospel. We have seen that Paul preached before he went out on his work from Antioch. Now if any plead his being set apart there, still the question is not met; for, as before stated, I reason not against such setting apart, if done as there by the Holy Ghost, but against the assertion that Christians, as such, are incompetent to preach. But the case alleged, if it prove anything as to the question at issue, proves that the power of ordaining, as well as of preaching, was not specially connected with office—and nothing more. The only other passage (which, though not commonly quoted, seems to me nearer the purpose) is the apostle's command, "the

same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also," 2 Tim. 2:2. But the thing committed here was the doctrine, and proved tradition, if anything —not ordination, for it does not appear that they were ordained for the purpose.

I have now produced ample evidence from Scripture to a fair mind. My object has been simply to shew the general liberty of Christian men to speak, whether in or out of the church, according to the several gifts which God may bestow upon them, without having need of the seal of human authority; and I say that the contrary assertion is a novelty in Christianity. I have abstained from diffusive discussions upon what has led to it, or the principles which are involved in it. I put the scriptural fact to any one's conscience; and I call upon any one to produce any scripture, positively, or on principle, forbidding to Christians the liberty of preaching, or requiring episcopal or other analogous ordination for the purpose.

And here I will advert to that which is commonly adduced upon the subject—the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. It is remarkable that those who rest upon it should pass by a case immediately preceding, bearing upon this immediate subject; that of Eldad and Medad prophesying in the camp, though they had not come up to the door of the tabernacle, because the Spirit rested upon them. "Would God," said the meek man of God, "that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them." That which was here typically proposed, the pouring out of the Spirit upon all, was in principle fulfilled in the Christian dispensation. Then, subsequently, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram acted not under the influence and energy of the

Spirit in testifying to the people, but would have assumed authority— the kingship of Moses, and the priesthood of Aaron. This was their fault, which very outrage is committed by those who attempt to defend themselves by urging the case before us: seeing that they are taking to themselves that kingship and priesthood which are Christ's alone, and setting up themselves as the only legitimate channels of blessing; and usurping His authority again on the other hand by excluding those who have the Spirit of God from exercising that which they have by the authority of God Himself.18 These things here spoken of were typical of our dispensation, as also the apostle states; and the conclusion is, that they make universal preaching desirable, and the assumption of priesthood a sin. To the same purpose is the argument of the apostle applied (Heb. 5), the exclusion from the office of priesthood, save by such call as Christ had; in which, in one sense, all believers are partakers—in another sense, He is alone, unaccompanied in the holy place. In a word, the claim of unrestricted liberty of preaching by Christians is right. The assumption of priesthood by any, save as all believers are priests, is wrong. This is the dispensation of the out-pouring of the Spirit here, qualifying, for preaching, any who can do so; in a word—for speaking of Jesus (for the distinction made between speaking and preaching is quite unsustainable by Scripture, as any one may see if he takes the trouble), and that in which Christ alone exercises the priesthood within the veil in the presence of God for us.

This, then, is the force of these passages. The type of the pouring out of the Spirit in the camp with the gracious wish of Moses is the characteristic, the essential

distinction of Christianity. Accordingly we find its primary presentation in the world, to be the Spirit poured out on the hundred and twenty who were assembled together, who therefore began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance. And Peter, standing up, explains to the Jews that they were not drunk, but it was the thing spoken of by Joel—the undistinguished pouring out of the Spirit upon men of all classes—servants and handmaidens, their sons and their daughters prophesying—the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh. This was the characteristic of its agency, and this we have seen acted upon in the subsequent history; to deny this, is to mistake the power of the dispensation, and, I will add, to lose it. And what is the consequence? Irregular action goes on, and cannot be restrained, for kingly power cannot be assumed to such purpose, or they are taking the part of Dathan and Abiram; but the power of the Spirit, in which God would give competency to restrain evil, has been slighted; and nominal office, which has been relied on, affords no remedy, unless the rights which the Roman Catholic system has assumed be attached to it, which is the assumption of power not given to the church at all. It is not for me to assert what is the evil of the present day; I am sure it is not the overflowing boldness of testimony against evil; and if evil exist, the remedy is not in seeking to hinder or to reject (for hindered, it surely will not, and cannot be) the title of preaching the word which the Spirit of the Lord gives to whomsoever He listeth, but the cordial co-operation of those who hold the truth, by which the common energy (and common energy is infinite energy in this matter) may be exercised against all who do not hold the truth, and for

the “seeking out of Christ’s sheep in the midst of this naughty world.”

One important advantage flowing from taking God’s order instead of man’s is at once seen; men will have their place and agency, whether within or without the assembly of the faithful, by virtue, not of nominal official situations formerly set up, but of the gifts which God has given them: a most important principle in the difference between Babylon and the divine economy. In truth, there are few things more important to remember, and especially in the present state of things, when human prescription regulates everything in matters of religion, that for anything but grace to be our criterion of station in the church (save in the awful responsibility of the individual, “these sinners against their own soul”)—must be wrong. In the last dispensation there was externally appointed order independent of qualification; in the present, the manifold grace and gifts of God in His church are the only means of adjusting and blending in true harmony the various parts and offices of the body of Christ.

With regard to one part of the work—evangelising, it is clear that a large portion of those who preach officially are incapacitated for it by their own act, as being shut up within restricted limits, and universally without any reference whatever to their individual qualifications, whether teachers, pastors, or evangelists, etc., or the particular necessities of the station in which they are to labour. To such it must be obvious, that the deficiency cannot be otherwise supplied than by those who may be willing to allow God to appoint the field of their operations, and to do the work of the Lord wheresoever they shall be led by Him to labour for His name’s sake (3

John 7), and who will be owned by Him, though a Diotrephes may reject them. Nothing argues greater want of submission to Christ—greater proof of preference of man's authority to the Lord's, than for any to discredit the free and unrestrained bearing forth of the gospel of the grace of God, who have placed themselves in circumstances where they are obliged to stop short of the work, for fear they should be discredited themselves; a work which they cannot do—which they have themselves put it out of their power to do, at least, without utter inconsistency; for in so doing, they would be acting in defiance of the authority which has placed them in their prescribed position. Such is their situation that, in following the leading of the Spirit of God in their work, they would in most cases, act unrighteously, for it would be against the authority which they recognise and act under.

Take a case, by no means uncommon, which illustrates the dilemma in which they place themselves. A large tract of the country is destitute of the gospel. One, in whose heart God has put the desire and whose mouth He has opened to speak of His love, goes, preaches there, and is blessed; gathers, out of darkness into light, many souls. The district is already full of persons professing to hold office in the church of Christ, but who are not shepherds. What is the labourer to do?—leave them for Socinians or enthusiasts to catch, or unheeded altogether? There is no godly righteousness in this. But it becomes a matter of faithfulness to Christ that he should preach to those who are ready to perish; yea, it is a necessity occasioned by the systems which sanction or have sanctioned the idle shepherds by whom he is surrounded. Now, which must an authorised minister,

even though a Christian, recognise? He must recognise those idle shepherds, and he cannot recognise the faithful man of God; that is, he must associate himself with ungodliness because it is in nominal office, and not with the Spirit of God because out of it. But he has placed himself in a position in which he must be wrong either way; for if he did not own those shepherds, he would be acting in dereliction of his own responsibilities to the system to whose authority he has voluntarily submitted himself. Hence, also, the answer to the question, “Why not take the nominal office?” Because the source is so vitiated, that many conscientious men cannot identify themselves with it; and (a consideration which, to one who habitually waits on the Lord, is of no small moment) that the work and the scene of his operations are not regulated by the Lord’s guidance, and the varied exigencies of His service, exigencies which can be met only by entire and unfettered looking to the Spirit of the Lord, which is the Spirit of true order, for doing the Lord’s work according to His own time, place, and purpose—considerations without which His servants are but busy-bodies (busy out of place, 2 Thess. 3:11) whatever may be the apparent result of their labours, and which in many instances amount to the acquirement of a positive disability to fulfil the office to which God may have appointed the individual, as in the case of an evangelist.

I would make one further observation, suggested by the present question. In observing the infinity of contending interests with which the church is now filled, “the wars and fightings “amongst brethren—the restlessness of those who are spending their power and spirituality in defending one human system against another—the

inquiry solemnly forces itself upon us whilst witnessing the surrounding scene of excitement, For what are we to contend? The apostle has answered the question, “Contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” Let the inquiry then be calmly proposed to all our minds, For what are we contending? If it be for anything of secondary derivation, God cannot own it: the contention is for our own, and not for the things of Christ: for nothing since delivered is of His Spirit.

The preceding considerations tend to shew that opinions, supported by ever so fair an appearance of antiquity, are worthless—are deeply injurious to the glory of God, unless based upon His word. The end in view will have been fully answered if but one servant of Christ should be added to that field of labour; or the doubts removed from the mind of but one brother who hesitates to acknowledge, as his fellow-workers, those who have been called by the same Spirit. And let it be observed that in this, as in all things, the liberty of the believer is not the spirit of insubordination, but of entire subjection to the Spirit and the church of God, wheresoever they may be found; not the spirit of enthusiasm, but of a sound mind—of a mind at one with God, which alone gives righteous judgment. And let the people of God be waiting upon Him for His guidance. It is a time in which those who act with the simplest purpose will carry the work with them (for it is a day in which God is separating realities from forms), as that which can alone stand the universal dislocation which every institution is undergoing, and which the Spirit of God shall, and can, alone go through unscathed, and they that are led by Him unmarred and unhurt.

May God work abundantly by His Spirit, and fill His labourers with it! “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”

15 The modern distinction between laity and clergy is not acknowledged here in any way whatever, as being totally unwarranted by scripture, and productive of the most disastrous effects in setting up a division between office and energy: that is, in accrediting an ungodly minister because ordained, and rejecting the man who has the Spirit of God, because of his not having passed through a system of human requirement.

16 Let the following words of the apostle be considered by those who, in common with the Roman Catholics, maintain this promise to be verified in what they term “apostolic succession”; “For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them,” Acts 20. Such was Paul’s view of apostolic succession, and one which, in principle, applied to the whole church, as it sank down together, after the decease of the apostles.

17 It is instructive to observe, that even in the Jewish worship there was far greater liberty of speech permitted than in the straitened systems of the present day. “Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.” There was an expectation and practice of mutual edification in their congregations, of which, in the present day, little or nothing is known.

18 Above all, is the exclusion of any who have the Spirit a grievous inconsistency in those who profess to own its influence, and to be guided by it; whatever excuse there may be for those who, being practically ignorant of its teaching, do throughout uniformly acknowledge the form without the power; for such are at least consistent.

## Parochial Arrangement Destructive Of Order In The Church

“God is not the author of confusion,” 1 Cor. 14.

To treat with apparent lightness of spirit anything that concerns the church of God I hold to be a great sin; and though there are a few occasions, very few, and those not connected with the humiliation of Jesus, in which the folly of evil may be brought before the eyes of the many, 19 yet my present subject, although absurd to the moral mind, leads me to no such feelings, nor do I desire to treat it in any such spirit. Looking upon it as a matter wherein the Holy Ghost is grieved and dishonoured, if I speak under the influence of that Spirit, I shall feel grieved also: and such is my feeling whilst observing how much of that which wears the fairest appearance, and ranks highest in ordinary estimation—nay, which is considered as the very triumph of Christian skill, and perfection of ecclesiastical arrangement, is actually at utter variance with the mind of God, and consequently with essential beauty and truth, which are only expressions of that mind.

It is often thought that the complaint of the present state of the church is a wild feeling, taking the dissatisfaction of self-will for the freedom of God’s Spirit, and seeking licentiousness under the name of liberty and in defiance of order. But where principles are not assumed (which is often the unsuspected foundation of many a pile of well-connected reasoning), it would not be difficult to prove that such a complaint is not necessarily fanatical or visionary, and that the plain and practical path of obedience is marked out on the other

hand by nothing more than common spiritual discernment, and common honesty of heart towards God. Now it appears to me that the present circumstances of the church have destroyed order, as well as liberty, which two things, at any rate while man is a sinner, must go together; and this is shortly proved. Take the existing state of things in its broad lines: it is not order, that all, or the majority of those called pastors, should be, instead of pastors, unconverted men. Yet this is admitted— even by many who acquiesce in the circumstances which have of necessity produced this fruit. It cannot be called order, that they should be appointed by man (men perhaps not members of God's church) and not by God; this is not order, nor does it produce order, but dissent and schism and confusion. But this is a fact, not only in its results, but in its principles—namely, that in what is called order, the appointment of the pastors flows from men not members of God's church at all. Succession, in whatsoever degree it may be rested upon, comes, not from Christ the minister of God's power, but from the Prime Minister. In days of infidelity or indifference it must be immediately evident to any one into what danger this at once throws the church, as far as it depends on this succession. Nor is this a speculative apprehension; for this danger is even now jn full operation, and by no means a mere probability, but in fact working in its worst possible form, namely—in shewing itself as the instrument of evil principles, not of good. Where such a. fact is evident, and that on all sides, it may seem superfluous to reason on the principle of the succession itself, for we have its legitimate results before us; but as many who are children of God hold by it, and seek to defend it, it may

be of some service to the truth to state it on their own principles.

The ordinary arguments against all objections are usually these: that in theory the appointers are members of the church of God, that in this view only they can look at it3 and that the actual evil is no ground to go upon. But, as will be seen, Christians will often find themselves in strange situations who disregard actual evil on the assumption that the system which produces it is theoretically correct; for in this manner there may be no limit to the measure of practical wickedness which will be tolerated, while conscience satisfies itself on the plea of an abstract excellence which may turn out to be a mere shadow, or worse. Such, however, is not the path of sound and Christian principle, which at once pronounces that the actual evil is the ground to go upon. God acts upon it, even though the system may be His own, as in the case of the Jews: “Thee only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities”: and the church is bound to act upon it, having the intelligence of God’s Spirit to discern the evil. The distinctive character of the church—of the individual informed by the Holy Ghost, is this, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity”; but the argument used admits the actual evil, yet, whilst avowing the name of Christ, does not depart from it. I ask high churchmen in particular, is it not iniquity that pastors, chief pastors, should be appointed, not by the church, by Christ, but by men, be they what they may? Is not this the fact? And if so, do they then depart from it? Is it the church that appoints them? If the predicament into which they are forced by this question is sought to be evaded upon the plea that the

Congé d’Elire saves them (a drowning man will catch at a straw), the answer does but further prove the iniquity of this system, from which men should not, it is said, depart; for it assumes that the persons in ecclesiastical office have the power to elect, or the argument is null, and consequently shews only the uniform betrayal of the interests of Christ by them into other hands than those of the church. They are thus driven to an extremity, where choice is to be had only between two conclusions; the last of which, that is, the surrender of the power if possessed, exhibits the constant iniquity of the church: whilst, on the other hand, if not possessed, the church is proved no longer to exist in the exercise of its habitual and necessary functions. Indeed, practically, it seems most honest and simple to say that the sovereign appoints to the bishopric. In Ireland even the poor excuse of the Congé d’Elire is taken away, for the bishops are appointed by letters patent openly by the crown. I have touched on this ground, because refuge is sought in it by some who feel conscientiously upon the subject. Let us return to the plain facts of the case. The Minister of the crown appoints the pastors to the flock of Christ, but churchmen defend themselves on the plea that it is still the church that does it. The simple answer is this—It is not so now, even in theory. No religion is necessary to the Prime Minister, nor does it practically constitute part of the theory of the state at all.20 But even on the supposition that it did, and that all the persons appointing were churchmen and Christians, it is not as such that they have to act in the capacity of appointers. But supposing it still further to be so, what at best is the state of things? We have Christians and laymen (I speak upon the church theory) appointing to the highest ecclesiastical offices, the superior

pastorships of the church, because they have secular office which the church, save in civil subjection, knows nothing about. Now I say, this is disorder and not order — the real bishops of the Established Church are the king and ministers of the day—for there cannot be a more important function of the church in its order, than the appointment of fit persons to feed the flock.

I can see nothing which seems to me Christian order in such appointments of bishops or chief pastors of God's flock; it presents nothing but immense disorder. I cannot recognise the hand of the church in the Bishop of Exeter, or the Archbishop of Armagh, though I do the church's responsibility. He may, through God's mercy, be a very good man, nay, he may have eminent qualities for the pastoral or episcopal office; but there is no order of God's church in it, but the order of the Prime Minister of England, or the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, who are not God's constituted officers for the appointment of the bishops of His flock in any church order. In point of fact, the necessary consequences have resulted in confusion and discord in the church of God; for while there was nominal order to which holy minds might desire to be subject, there was, at the same time, the complete amalgamation of the church and the world, which the Spirit of God loudly testified against, and holy men must separate from, and the professed church become the great author of schism.

And here we must note what is a great fallacy in the notion which the church of England desires to give respecting her own constitution. It carries a falsehood on the face of it. We are referred to the articles, or canons, and prayer-book for her constitution and order; but she has not said a word there about her constitution

and order, or what she has said is false. The constitution and order of the church of England and Ireland is, that the king and his ministers, or other analogous persons, appoint to all the pastoral offices in the country. Where is this stated in these fair-spoken documents? Would churchmen who hold fast by these documents state and avow this, that laymen, it may be ungodly men, should appoint to all the pastoral offices in the country? Is this what they mean to plead as order—church order? Yet church order it is. They state, indeed, that they only ascribe to their princes to rule with the civil sword all the estates of the realm, but they ascribe a great deal more. This was a most godly ascription; but if they have only ascribed this, their princes have ascribed a great deal more to themselves (and they have acquiesced in it, though they have not put it in the book—though it constitutes the special difference of the system, and makes it the church, or, as some may say, not the church of England), and that is, that these individuals, who might be in excommunication, appoint nearly all the pastors in the country. I would ask if there is any order in all this? We have had an eminent instance of this system in principle and practice, when, with one fell swoop, a minister, and not the king at all, but a House of Commons (and who are they in the church?) struck off ten or twelve of the bishops of a country: that is, he not only is the appointer of the persons, but orders the whole internal arrangement of their superintendence, saying how much is a proper extent of episcopal care, and who shall exercise it. But the great point which strikes at the root of all the church order, and of which the documents state nothing and therefore are a false witness for the church, is, that the pastoral appointments have no connection at all with the church.

The succession is from the crown, from the world and its power, not from God at all; so that the great distinctive difference of the church of England would not be found on the face of her own account of herself at all. But that distinctive difference destroys the principle of a church.

But while the church does not honestly state its character, the principle of disorder goes a great deal farther, and all real order is destroyed by the system. By virtue of this system, a number of persons are appointed as clergy or ministers of parishes. There is no reference whatever to the various offices flowing from specific gifts. The scripture indeed speaketh on this wise, “When he ascended up on high, he … gave gifts unto men … and he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”: the beautifully ordered and united means by which the body is perfected and built up. But this is trampled under foot for a fancied succession which is denominated clergy, a body of men not appointed to offices in the church, but to the exclusive government of a geographic district. That is, the offices of the church, the legitimate channels for the exercise of the combined gifts by which Christ ministers to its edification and the perfecting of the saints, are thrown to the winds; so that even when the clergyman happens to be a godly man, the saints, if there be such in the place, are deprived of the ministration of their offices, by which Christ has provided for their edification, by virtue of the system which calls itself order, but the principle of which is to throw the appointment of even nominal pastors out of all order into the hands of secular men. The same

individual must be pastor, evangelist, teacher, and every other office necessary for the perfecting of the saints and edifying the body of Christ, or the ministry must be crippled and maimed, and the results accordant. And this is the principle of the system. Christ has ordained certain gifts for the edifying of the saints; men have ordered the placing of certain persons, who may not even be Christians, in a given place, with the sole ordering of the church in that place. The argument then is brought to this point— either the system must assume the possession of every gift by all the individuals it pleases to appoint, and exclude all others from them, or it is proved that their system is at variance in principle with the right order of Christ's church. But they can assume no such thing, for the Spirit distributes to every man severally as He will. This is His prerogative.

The system is proved, therefore, to be at variance with the order of Christ, and that in its vital object, "the perfecting of the saints." It is at variance with the actual order in which He declares that He ministers it; for He gave some evangelists; some pastors, and teachers. But no; we must make all of them everything, or the system violates Christ's order in its very objects; and this the apostle controverts (how much more may we in these days?). "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers?" But, no; Christ gives gifts as He pleases, and man gives authority as he pleases, and then calls this order. It is the devil's order, a turning of things upside down, and exhibits a state of things justly calling forth the expression of righteous indignation no less than of godly sorrow. Surely "it is yet a little while." So that on the whole, the principle of the system is not only at variance with the derivation of grace and knowledge

(seeing that the selection is made by the crown and its ministers, not by the church of God), but also necessarily with all office in the church, by which the body should be ministered to, according to the gift which Christ had given to every man for the effectual purpose of that ministry. I speak now of the theory, passing by all charges on the state of facts in parochial ministrations, and I affirm that the theory precludes the exercise of the offices which Christ has instituted for the perfecting of the saints. A man is appointed a deacon for the purpose, perhaps, of being an evangelist, and would justly, perhaps, refuse to attend to tables. God may have called out, by the ministry of this individual, another, eminently qualified to be an elder in the church of God, for which, though gifted as an evangelist, the former may be eminently disqualified; nevertheless the same person (now translated to the order of a presbyter or priest), without the least change of gift, becomes elder there with no qualification, to the exclusion of one who is qualified, having, it may be, his usefulness as an evangelist quite destroyed by his being put in an office for which God never qualified him; but it must be so because he is the clergyman. Thus, again, we find in principle, that the offices of Christ's church, by which its order is kept, are altogether avoided by this system which is called order; yea, that the offices and the system are incompatible; for the notion of the individual who was called to it being presbyter, or of any being presbyter whom God has qualified for it, is precluded, for some one is called the clergyman of the place. Again, reverse the case: a godly man well qualified to be the pastor and edifier, it may be, of saints, a terror of the ungodly, and healer of them that are wounded, a warrior against Satan's entrance into the fold, is set in a place

where, from neglect, there is scarcely any practical knowledge of Christ. God has not gifted the man as an evangelist—what is the consequence? He has no saints to edify, and his heart is discouraged at his utter uselessness; he might have been a signal blessing to the church of God somewhere, if such a system had never existed.

But let us look a little further. One whom God has gifted as an evangelist comes in and exercises his gift in the same locality (it must not be a clergyman—that would be disorderly, nor is evangelising properly a parochial ministration); but he is irregular. The godly pastor without any flock is a bar, on the system of the church of England, to any of God's ministry being carried on; and if he be consistent with the system, he opposes God's ministry in the place, and while, perhaps, a real saint himself, has none of the church of God around him to which he might be useful. Thus a schism is created; or it may be, the other, qualified to be an evangelist, is constituted by the people to be a pastor, to which God never called him at all; and he who would have been a blessing to them, is despised and neglected, because of the system of the church of England, which necessarily involves the subversion of all the offices of the church of Christ. Indeed it does not proceed on the recognition of them. The country has been secularly divided into districts, and the clergy appointed, without reference to the state of the people at all, in their respective districts; the effect of which is only to place any one besides, who exercises the office which is necessary there, in the position of a schismatic. It is quite clear too, that in a vast number of instances, the appointment, being a secular interest, is made by those who have no church

principles at all, for temporal reasons and motives. And if we are then told “the church is not to blame,” and the question is asked, “How can the bishops help it? “I answer, not at all, and therefore the church is fundamentally wrong in principle: it avows it cannot help evil, and how could it, since the heads of it are appointed on the same principle? But supposing the bishops godly pastors of Christ’s flock, and to appoint to offices, according to Christ’s institution, evangelists and teachers and pastors, or to recognise any other office in the Church, they would at once be in schism as to the whole present constitution of parochial arrangement. That is, the system, if recognised, is irretrievably at variance with the admission of offices in the church of God, by which the saints are perfected, and the body edified; and the effect of it is to give the character of schism to all those who exercise the office to which God has ordained them. And this is called order (it is the most heinous and wicked disorder) in God’s church. Let me be ever such an evangelist, gifted like an apostle, I am disorderly in exercising it; nor would ordination in any way mend the matter, for my exercise of the gift would be disorderly, because of a nominal pastor in a given place: all is preoccupied, and evangelising has no place, and becomes irregular. The conclusion therefore which is forced upon our minds is, that the system is evil, not only in the disastrous results of so many being called pastors who have no pastoral qualifications (a consequence flowing from the principle of appointment), and mischievous, not only as restraining the exercise of liberty in the people of God (a restraint indeed which is often very right if done according to godliness), but as being destructive of all offices in the church of Christ and subversive of the principle on which they rest. And,

moreover, that under the parochial or rather the clerical system the offices of the church of Christ cannot be exercised, at least in order. Nor does the system of Dissenters appear in this respect at all different: they equally confound the order of the church, with the difference only of having no local limits, which so far prevents the notion of schism (a system of local limits having by the way no possible consistency or warrant from scriptural order of churches). I am not entering now on the question of diocesan episcopacy; but it is quite clear that in its origin it went by churches, not by geographical limits. That is, a bishop governed the churches in such a limit (that is, those who might be gathered out from heathenism), but that was all; and within such district all the offices above mentioned might be exercised with gladness of heart and profit to those who were gathered: but parochial clericalism cannot in any way combine with this. It is absolutely without consistency with any order in the church. An individual is appointed, at three or four and twenty, to a curacy or parish, and he alone may be the elder (an office for which it is clear he is seldom qualified), teacher, pastor, evangelist, if needed. He is the shut-door to the exercise of any office in the church, whether he himself have any gift or the contrary. If God's Spirit is to work at all, then it must be a schismatic; and this is the hateful evil and disorder of such a system—it makes a schismatic of the Spirit of God.

The office of an evangelist is not a parochial office. It may, in given instances, be exercised within the limits of a parish, but the office knows no such limits, nor does the exercise of such an office imply qualification for being a pastor; nay, in its ordinary exercise it necessarily

disqualifies for being an elder. But the notion of a clergyman, which is wholly unsupported by Scripture, summarily settles the whole question, and removes all the offices at once. For it assumes all within the limit to be Christians, and decides that the person (having the sphere of his service prescribed by men, though his ostensible commission is from the laying on of the bishop's hands) who is thus considered as being over his flock, is to have the title to exclude the exercise of every office which he may not happen to possess; though it is evident that, even if a good man (most frequently not the case), he may be gifted for no office at all, and clearly cannot be assumed in every instance to possess them all. And now suppose the Spirit, thus grieved and dishonoured, should begin to work in sovereign mercy, will it be exclusively confined to the system which has dishonoured it, and haughtily domineered over all its order and grace? It cannot be so; it works where it may work, blowing where it lists. Some of those who, unconscious of the evil, are in the system, may be quickened into energy by its influence; and though in extreme irregularity and disorder (an evangelist exercising the office of a pastor here, and a pastor exercising the office of an evangelist there, and both unprofitably), yet in some measure they may work within their respective limits. The system however itself is unmended. Some of those who are without may be raised up into energy; they at once see that the system is essentially wrong; they wish not to be schismatics in any sort: labour they must, yea, exercise pastoral care if God has committed it to them; but these individuals with the very same class of gifts, are stamped at once Dissenters and schismatics. And what is the meaning of this, but that the system which gives the name of schism

is such as to preclude the exercise of God's gifts as far as it can?

Let us suppose, for further exemplification of our argument, a large district without the gospel preached in it: an individual is raised up of God, a stranger to the place, who preaches there; a thousand souls are converted—what is to be done? Of the number thus awakened, five are specifically gifted of God for the office of pastor, or teacher, or elder. The question at once arises, are these thousand souls to be left shepherdless, because men have chosen to appoint persons called clergymen, who turn out not to be Christians at all—nay, who, it may be, belie the gospel of Christ? I will suppose, that to prevent heresies and confusion (a point surely of material import in these days) some or all of these five practically act as pastors. Ordained for it according to the church system they cannot be, for the clergy are there already'; but the love of Christ constrains them to do the best they can for the sheep. They are at once set down as causers of division; that is, the whole church of God, as far as that place is concerned, is denounced as schismatic. In a word, the effect of the church of England system, instead of being godly order, throws into schism, in reputation, nearly the whole church of God. And this is anything rather than an imaginary case. Afterwards it may be, a saint becomes a clergyman in the district; he draws some back to church, or is the instrument of converting others: and two systems are formed, in which saints within one and the other are thrown into opposition; and of the whole of this part of the evil the church of England system is the original cause; however it may be perpetuated by the other system which its evil may have generated. The

mischievous results are endless; but while these are abundantly sufficient to act upon, the truth is that the principle of the system is irreconcilably at variance with the order, the discipline, or the efficiency of the church of God; while it excludes the recognition of all offices in the church, and infallibly perpetuates schism. And such has been its effect.

The point to which I now specifically allude is, that it has been the author of, or has at least perpetuated, the destruction of all offices in the church of God, by which the saints are to be perfected, and the body edified; which are absolutely incompatible with the notion of that scripturally unrecognised and actually undefined office—a clergyman. By casualty, it may have happened that one gifted for office may have had a limited opportunity of its exercise; but in no case can it have been exercised according to the order of the church of God. It does not appear to me that the dissenting body has at all emerged from this snare—office with them being equally confused.

I will now give its effects even within the system, where there are godly ministers, under circumstances in which it is practically reduced to the limit of dissent as a system—the private choice of ministry, which is the common practice in large towns. I give it in the words of one who, being a godly high churchman, forms an unexceptionable witness to its practical effects.

“It is one of the sad consequences of our divisions and disunions, and the neglect of pastoral superintendence, that the oneness of interest, which ought to prevail among the members of one church, and especially of one flock, is very much weakened, if not lost sight of. Each

man looks to his own things, his own edification, his own comfort, his own progress, so that a kind of selfishness has sprung up in our religion itself. The injury which this has done in the church is incalculable. It leads to endless divisions. Each man is tempted to' seek a ministry adapted to his own state. If he be only a little way advanced in his perception of divine truth, he will go where he can hear taught the early lessons of the school of Christ. If he be further advanced, he will go where he can hear deeper things; and the temptation arising from this to the ministry is, that it should be ever accommodated to the state of the hearer, thus checking all growth in grace, and destroying all symmetry in the body of Christ. Hence it arises that we have some congregations who are only babes in Christ, and content to remain so; and others more exclusively strong men in Christ, who, forgetting their own former weakness, are apt to be filled with self-sufficiency and pride."21 The statements I have made are neither an exposition of abuses, though abundant room might have been afforded for it, nor indefinite, though I have reasoned on the principle, because the soundness of this is alleged when abuse is admitted. I say abundant room for exposing abuse, for the computation of the most sanguine evangelical ministers is, that two-thirds of the pastors so-called of the church, are not merely without specific gifts for given office, but do not preach the gospel at all—surely, a strange state of things, and one which flows from the system they are anxious to vindicate; whilst the perpetual use of this criterion of "preaching the gospel" shews the want of any apprehension of the difference of offices in the church, which the habits of their system have generated—a

system, I repeat it, subversive of all specific office in the church of God.

19 Of which we have instances in Elijah's contention with the priests of Baal; and the more deliberate reproof of Isaiah in his comparison (of which man had forced the institution) of Jehovah the everlasting God, and the stock of a tree; and again in the exposure of popish false miracles and pretensions at the time of the Reformation, analogous in character.

20 "No head of any college, nay, no three colleges possess half the ecclesiastical patronage of which I have the disposal. I have from 800 to 900 livings in my gift, and from 18 to 20 stalls in cathedrals; still I am not bound to subscribe the 39 articles—I have never done so; I am not called upon. No test, sacramental or subscriptory, was demanded before or after my admission into office."—Extract from Lord Brougham's speech in the House of Lords, in April, 1834.

21 "General Redemption and Limited Salvation," by W. Dodsworth, M.A. Mr. Dodsworth subsequently seceded to Rome. It may be remarked, that the word 'office' is used in this paper with reference to the habitual exercise of gifts, as evangelists, pastors, etc. It may be more convenient to call elders and deacons ' offices,' as distinct from gifts. Elders were locally appointed "in every city," whereas gifts were given of Christ and set in the church as members of the one body. But, as in preceding papers, I have left this as it was.

## The Character Of Office In The Present Dispensation

It is remarkable how the Lord, when He has led us a little way, by faith, in simplicity of dependence on Him, provides, by the intervention of His gracious loving-kindness and guidance, for the exigency of circumstances, which the failings of men produce around us; thereby teaching us to depend on Him for circumstances, as well as for ourselves; and keeping us (the great position of truth) in continual dependence, that we may, in our feebleness, learn the fulness of His resources and the faithfulness of His love. His watchful care thus keeps us leaning on it, as our only security from the power of selfishness and evil. Men, in all circumstances, shrink from the sense of dependence—dependence upon God: it requires faith. They are willing to trust upon man present, not upon God to their eyes absent; though a thing to be learned (this is the great lesson of the Christian dispensation), the character of all sanctity; it is true of righteousness in the Christian dispensation, and of course, therefore, ever in truth; and it is true in every circumstance of individual life, and of the necessities of the church. The book of Numbers, the history of the Israelites, is a lesson of this—a lesson of faith. We get out of Egypt, not knowing perhaps how, whither, or where we are going, only that we are leaving Egypt: but when Canaan is our constant hope, the wilderness is our constant way: whether our journey be long or short, of vigour of attainment, or of self-earned weariness of unbelief, it is still through the wilderness; and God is there with us teaching us faith, teaching us

to depend upon God, where there is nothing else to depend upon. There may be green spots from Him who gives rivers in the wilderness: yea, from our own souls rivers may flow, fed from the Rock that never fails. At the commandment of the Lord we may journey; at the commandment of the Lord we may rest awhile. Manna may daily surround our camp, surely fed every morning's early dawn; but we are still in the wilderness, in entire dependence upon God, learning to enjoy, in the well taught lesson of whence the enjoyment really comes. The losing the sense of this was the very mark of guilt in the Israelites in the land. "A Syrian ready to perish "was their constant confession in their faith, when they brought the first fruits of that good land—a land of valleys, and watered with the dew of heaven, a land where the Lord's eyes continually were. This is our continual failing in the service of the church, failing in the sense of entire dependence. There is nothing so hard to the human heart as constant dependence. When faith fails, we constantly find out where we are: it is the wilderness or God. Nothing is so foolish as self-dependence; for, in very deed, it is God or the wilderness. Thus it is in the righteous position of the church's exigence—apt to loathe the light food, but conducted ever of God.

But there is another state of things far worse than this, when Babylon has carried the body of the people away, that is, the reluctance of the residue to stay in dependence of faith, and their determination to go down into Egypt for help, where judgment would surely overtake them. Such is the continual tendency of the human heart: such help is the church therefore continually seeking. But the church is not of this world,

even as Christ is not of this world. And how is Christ not of this world? Surely in spirit and in character He is not of it, as it is an evil world, unholy, opposite to God. When His spotless excellency passed through, it was unscathed, though passing through every scene that wearies and bows down our frail and feeble hearts. But it was with other thoughts also that Jesus was not of this world, and so said He of His disciples. He was not of it, but of heaven—the Lord from heaven; and we are not of it, but from thence, associated with Him who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and who is now separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens, now in manifested association (that is, to faith, as the object of it there), in the accomplishment of what forms the dispensation in the heavens. The founding of the dispensation upon the accomplishment of the exaltation of its Head is of the greatest importance, because it is the ground of ascertained righteousness and its extent, and the seal of the character of the whole dispensation. It belongs, as being rejected in its Head from the world, to the heavenlies. But it is not merely as the result of the treatment of the Lord and His being glorified, that the dispensation had such a character, and held such a place: in the purpose of God it had no other place. It was the secret of God hidden from ages and generations, and formed an extraordinary break in the dispensations, to the rejection, for their unbelief, of the proper earthly people of God; a forming out of the earth, but not for it, a body for Christ—a heavenly people associated with Him in the glory in which He should be and should reign, when the full time was come, over the earth, in those times of restitution which should come from the presence of the Lord; a system forming no part of the earthly system, though carried on through the death of

Christ in the forming of its members in it, but that, when all things are gathered together in one in Christ, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, these should be associates of His glory, in whom it and the riches of His grace should be shewn, given them in Christ Jesus before the world began, according to the gift of the Father; a purpose formed for Christ's especial and personal glory before the worlds, and kept secret till the time of His sending down the Spirit after the actual glory was accomplished, after He had entered, in risen manhood, into the glory which He had with the Father before the world was.

The church has sought to settle itself here; but it has no place on the earth. It may shew forth heavenly glory here according to that given to it; but it has no place here, but in glory with Christ in heavenly places at His appearing. We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

This subject, as to the special distinctness of the dispensation, has been treated of elsewhere, and therefore I do not enter into it at large here. I believe it to be the most important point for the church to consider now. Looked at as an earthly dispensation, it merely fills up, in detailed exercise of grace, the gap in the regular earthly order of God's counsels, made by the rejection of the Jews on the covenant of legal prescribed righteousness, in the refusal of the Messiah, till their reception again under the new covenant in the way of grace on. their repentance; but, though making a most instructive parenthesis, it forms no part of the regular order of God's earthly plans, but is merely an interruption of them to give a fuller character and meaning to them. As to the thing introduced, we are

called to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is not the place or time of His glory: our calling therefore is not at all here; but when Christ who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory. Ministration upon earth is merely to this purpose. The moment there is a minding of earthly things, there is enmity to the cross of Christ; for “our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself.” The Jewish system was a system of derived earthly authority; and while the church was simply among them, it never lost its earthly character entirely; it was open at any time to the return of the Lord, and was formed upon the order of derivative authority from Him when He had not yet ascended into glory, though it was accompanied by the Spirit, which enabled them to testify to His ascended glory. But they were Jews; and they maintained the character of the earthly system so far as it was associated with the risen Saviour, the hope of Israel: for that which was identified with the resurrection of Christ was the “sure mercies of David.”

Thus we find the Lord telling them, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness of me, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” Accordingly, we find the eleven choosing Jewishly by lot (before the descent of the Holy Ghost from heaven, the witness of the glory) one to be a witness with them of the resurrection, one who had

companied with them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them. So, in the sermon to those who came together on hearing of the tongues, we read, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are witnesses”: and then he uses the descent of the Holy Ghost as the witness of His exaltation. Again, in the sermon in Solomon’s porch. “Whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses,” and then goes on with a sermon purely Jewish. In Acts 5:32, the double witness is directly referred to, and distinguished. So the Lord breathed the Spirit of God into His disciples, after the resurrection, saying, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost”: “whose soever sins ye remit,” etc. Subsequently they received the Holy Ghost, the witness of exalted glory.

Thus, the apostles became the heads of derivative power apparently (at any rate the existing depositaries of authority; for derivative commission was never conferred upon them), and stood before the world the founders of the church among the Jews, with commission to extend it to all nations. But the Lord, save in the testimony of apostasy by the apostle John in the Revelation, gives us no authentic account of any such transmission of it through the world. It formed no part of the record—nothing on which the church of God had to rest for its direction. It is remarkable, too, that the prayer of our Lord in John 17 was literally fulfilled in the Jewish church, in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, in them who were one together in the unity of those who believed on Him through their word, their separation out of the world, even to the surrender of their goods, and the witness thus afforded to it, praising God and having favour with all the people, great grace

being upon them all. Here the scene all but closes; such we see not elsewhere at all. This was the church of those connected with Christ in the flesh, who had seen Him in the resurrection, and derived their authority from Him in earthly association, though endued with power from on high; ignorant of the times when the kingdom should be restored to Israel, but knowing that the heavens had received Him who was able, and was to do it; and looking for the repentance of the people that He might return.

But that people did not repent. Another witness was raised up, when this witness of His resurrection was refused and the power of the Holy Ghost in it rejected, to declare Jesus at the right hand of God; and to shew demonstratively in His power, that they were doing as their fathers had ever done— resisting the Holy Ghost; but this was, in fact, a testimony against them for their previous rejection of the apostolic word and power recorded in the previous chapters, and it is closed by the testimony of seeing heaven now opened, launching the church into a new scene, a scene of death to itself, but into which it entered by the perception of heaven open, and Jesus seen there. With this, accordingly, Jewish testimony to it as a church closed. Jesus was not seen sitting as we see Him in spirit, but standing at once to receive His suffering church. Here the Jewish scene finally closed till they should say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,” accomplishing this word of the Lord, and the view of Him in heaven thus opened to the church. Individuals might be converted and doubtless were; but the order of Jewish ministry ceased.

Heretofore it had been confined to Jerusalem, and in regular witness by the apostles, eye-witnesses of His resurrection to the Jews, and filling up and arranging the necessary offices, as we read in the Acts. But death and the heavenlies were now the portion of the church of God; its earthly order and continuance gone: and (though Peter preached among the Jews, and the rest we know not from Scripture where) succession and order as to them we find not in Scripture at all. There is no authentic statement as to where any of them went, no scriptural statement at all, save that Peter continued his labours as apostle of the circumcision (the only place he holds in Scripture) and that the apostles continued at Jerusalem, as we find in the Acts and other parts of the apostolic writings. But another scene now opened. The heavenlies we have now seen as the positive known and only portion of the church; for earthlies were Jewish, and they had rejected the testimony of Christ risen and exalted by the Holy Ghost, from the apostles and Stephen. Stephen's ministry was suited to this: chosen among the Hellenists, he formed the link, having purchased to himself a good degree and great boldness to bear witness, not as an eye-witness, but by the Holy Ghost, of Christ. Accordingly this is entirely his charge, not "We cannot but speak of the things which we have seen and heard," as Peter says to the rulers, but the witness of the rejection of the Holy Ghost; of which being full, he saw Jesus in the heavenlies. Thus he formed the link between Jewish rejection and the position and state of the church which followed. And what succeeds? Not Jewish order, but sovereign grace approving itself by the energy of the Spirit.

They were all scattered abroad except the apostles, lest it should seem derived from them, “and they that were scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the word.” Who sent them? Persecution. Who enabled them? The grace and Spirit of God. And it reached the Gentiles. There was no Gentile church but by what in these days is called irregularity— what is really the sovereignty of the grace by which any Gentile is called in the extraordinary and seemingly irregular act of God. For salvation is of the Jews: a Jewish Jesus is not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but a glorified Jesus doth what seemeth good unto the glory of the grace of which He is now the indiscriminate (as to men), but sure distributer. But the character of the change which took place is at once shewn by this dispersion and universal preaching wherever they went. The ordinary Christians preceded the apostles, that it might be plainly not derived from them. The whole matter then, to justify anything, was “the hand of the Lord was with them, and many believed”: a very irregular and out-of-the-way thing for human nature, but which God has ordered as the way of salvation. Thus we find, in the Jewish rejection of the apostles, the instantaneous cessation of derivative arrangement, and the whole dispensation, as carried on upon earth, assuming a new character. This was the actual breaking of the earthly order, as the former scene with Stephen was the closing of the Jewish ‘possibility of the dispensation.

But a new scene now opens—the regular Gentile form and order of the dispensation in the hands of the apostle Paul, the apostle of the uncircumcision, the apostle of the Gentiles. Did he then derive it from the apostles? or was he indeed a successor to our Lord by earthly

appointment and derivation? No; in no wise. It was his continual boast that it was not so—his continual conflict with Judaising teachers, what was often charged on him, as though he needed it, with which they pressed his spirit, but which he as sternly and steadily refused, withstanding them who had such authority to the face. He is the type of the dispensation. Every dispensation has its character, from the manner in which Christ is manifested and introduced in it; and its order from Him under whom it takes its rise as to ministration. God, not yet known to the church in covenant, but the same God revealed as Almighty, was the dispensation to Abraham called out to trust in Him, and gave its character to the path in which he had to walk in hope.

Christ (for now it was in covenant, revealed as Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) was that under which Moses the leader in the wilderness, and Joshua in the land, led in succession the children of Israel under the order of successional priesthood for ever.

Christ as Messiah, God manifested in the flesh, closing the age of the law, and bringing in everlasting righteousness, the head of Jewish order, was He whom they should have received; and He could give and did give His derived authority to the apostles whom He had chosen—Christ risen, still a Jewish hope, the securer of the sure mercies of David, was He whom they had rejected, in spite of the testimony of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Christ glorified and supreme, the hope to every Jew scattered abroad and every Gentile sinner, the witness of sovereign grace, whatever the failure in evil. Those in whom the revelation was deposited, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, were characteristic of the time in which the Spirit wrought by them. So of

the twelve: Christ was the true Vine, not the nominal Israel, and they the branches, deriving their authority from Him as the patriarchs from Israel; the dispensation thus far taking its entire and orderly character from them. It was a Jewish, though a Christian thing. That is, it was Jewish in its present order: it began at Jerusalem; but this ceased as a line when the risen Christ was rejected. The grace of God flowed in through the sandy desert and wilderness of the world, to make green, where it flowed, what it found buried in evil in it, when no watering of the tree which He had planted could cause it to bring forth good fruit to His glory and its own profit and acceptance.

And as the Spirit went, like the wind, where it listed, every one that was born of it was, according to the measure of the grace, the witness of the grace that he had received: for God had not lit candles to put them under bushels. Paul became the head and characterising agent of the dispensation among the Gentiles, not derivative but efficient. Hence God made him so powerful and so tried against derivative mission. “I received it,” says he, “not of man nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him up from the dead.” So of the gospel which he preached: he certifies them, he was jealous of this point; he neither received it of man, neither was he taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ: and he gives this general character of himself, “Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time,” as an abortion (ektroma); and this character attaches to the whole dispensation, an extraordinary arrangement and provision, something born out of due time—ektromatal—for the time present, till the earthly system is just ready

to be restored, but belonging entirely to the heavenlies, having no earthly derivation or connection in its power with the succession of that order which was first outwardly established. It derived its stream higher up from the same source, though recognising it in its place. (See Galatians 2.) If it had such connection, what was all Paul's reasoning about? or why did he take such pains to prove it did not so derive itself—or why the Spirit of God refute the notion of Paul's derivative character, when he preached the same doctrine, and held the same truths? It was the grand testimony to the break of successional authority, which was Jewish: the church, as a separate thing for glory, being now set on this unearthly footing on its own basis of apprehension of it by the Spirit.

Accordingly, the evidence which the apostle affords of his apostolate is never derivative, or that he had authority from others; but, "If I am not an apostle unto others, doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord": "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me,… examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." So his argument, as to the dispensation, is "When he ascended up on high,… he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets," etc.

Now the twelve were apostles, and had the express name from our Lord's commission, before He ascended up on high at all. Yet they do not come into the apostle's

contemplation in spirit at all—that is, in any such character, because they did not, in that state, constitute a part of the dispensation of gift, and authority by gift, of which he was the minister and expounder. This was associated with the ascended glory of Christ— “When he ascended up on high, he gave.” Accordingly, when the apostle was called, he was called not as knowing Christ after the flesh (if he had, he would know Him no more); but as one, who as a Jew, in ignorance indeed, had consented to that very act against Stephen which shewed the rejection of the Jews; and was a killing apostle of the Sanhedrim who had been so guilty, to find any of those who called upon His name. He was identified, not with the believing, but with the unbelieving portion of the Jews, when the question was between them; and he was not a Christian at all while the church had this character. He was the witness of the calling of grace, and the perception of supreme glory. The manner of his call was declarative of both. He was in the career of opposition to Christ, and was arrested to be the witness of His glory, and of whatever should be revealed to him—not of His earthly career; to that he had been a spiritual stranger—not of His fellowship when risen with His brethren; from that he had been a careless outcast, or a bitter opposer to it—but of His ascended glory.

It was not, as with the twelve, the patient tracing with slow understanding the unfolding glory of the Man Jesus conversant among them, till they followed Him, through the apparent death of all their hopes, by the resurrection, “being seen of them forty days,” into the known certainty of His exaltation to the clouds in which He should one day appear again so coming, and the

witness of where He was because the Spirit had been sent down, from the Father; but the sudden and unlooked-for perception of the heavenly glory of the Lord, above the brightness of the sun, and finding that this was Jesus. That is, beginning at the glory, the heavenly glory, and aware that he saw and heard the Lord speaking from heaven, he asks and finds that this glorified One, this glorious Lord, was Jesus whom he was persecuting. Hence his mission was wholly of the glory in its source, not a witness of the suffering and a partaker of the glory to be revealed, but a witness of the glory and a partaker of the sufferings; and so ever preaching this mystery among the Gentiles "Christ in you the hope of glory."

This, then, was the calling of Paul, a sovereign calling by grace, revealing the Son in him—one born out of due time; and this when the church was entirely heavenly, entirely underived, and necessarily rejecting derivation, or he would have denied the character of his calling, and lost the authority of his mission; for the Jewish things would have remained. It was heavenly, underivative, of grace, and by revelation, and that of the glory, and drew all its character and all its evidence from this; and this is carefully insisted on by him, and urged by the Spirit of God. The ordination of the apostle stamped the seal on the same truth. First, it was secured by the divine counsels that he should preach and testify within and without synagogues and congregations concerning the Lord Jesus. Without anything further than the calling spoken of, he preached the faith which he had once destroyed, as he himself expresses it, "As it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe

and therefore speak”; as the other apostles, “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

And so is the energy of the Holy Ghost ever; whether it be the sure resurrection of Jesus, the revealed glory of the Lord; or with Jeremiah, in derision daily because of his words to the people—it “is in his heart as a burning fire shut up in his bones; he was weary with forbearing and could not.” If in liberty, there was the rejoicing as being counted worthy to suffer shame; if reluctant and tried by the iniquity in a state ready to be judged, the word of the Lord was more powerful than the fears: though on every side— “he believed and therefore spake.” The glory of the Lord must be vindicated; and it becomes a positive responsibility. Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel or under a bed, and not to be set upon a candlestick? “For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested; neither was anything kept secret but that it shall come abroad”: and it is our business to manifest it in the truth and energy of the Spirit. Therefore “if any man have ears to hear, let him hear”: and “Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measure to you; and to you that hear shall more be given.”

Hence we also find the apostle declaring, “When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days; but other of the apostles saw I none, save James the

Lord's brother." Fourteen years after, he went up, but it was by revelation; and in conference he found that those who seemed to be somewhat added nothing to him: and this was the point with him. It was no haughtiness of spirit, and he was willing to try his word by theirs; but he found they could add nothing; and they owned the grace that was in him, though he derived no authority from them, the appointed apostles of the Lord, and recognised none in them save in the sphere which God had allotted to them; and they owned the grace of God which was in him. When need was, he withstood them to the face, because they were to be blamed who were insisting upon the old ordinances. To such things he would give subjection, no, not for an hour.

And what then was his career, because of the glory revealed to him, his ordination as men speak, if he did not go up to those who were apostles before him? The energy of the Spirit, consequent on the revelation of the Lord, still held its character in securing the breaking through the apostolic succession. There was no derivative link from the Lord; there was the revelation of the Lord and mission by Him, but no human ordination; and in this he worked long, and not only in preaching or teaching strangers, but Barnabas, having gone to Tarsus to find him, brings him to Antioch; and it came to pass that for a whole year they assembled themselves with the church and taught much people. Who settled this? Who appointed them here? Who, Paul? Who, Barnabas? The grace of the Spirit of God wrought effectually in them; and so the apostles, as we have seen, had to judge: they perceived the grace of God that was given to them, and they gave them the right hand of fellowship. But still in public mission had they no derivative

authority from some human ordination? Or was not abstract apostolic mission the ground on which it rested? Long it had been so; for God was securing in every way, that human dependence, human derivation should be broken in upon; for its place was gone in the earth.

The dispensation was one born out of due time; it must prove itself by its energy from on high: so it had been proved both in preaching Christ and teaching the church. But now Barnabas and Paul were to be sent out on a definite mission, and, of course, they had derived authority now. Whence? Everything was still made to depend on the energy and calling of God. “As certain prophets and teachers were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Paul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have called them; and when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” Did the apostle derive his authority, his apostolic authority, from his ordination? That would be a strange assertion; and he says he had it neither of nor by man. If this had been his first going forth to preach, it would have been almost impossible to have hindered the conclusion that it had its source in this, and the apostolate would merely have been from the church at Antioch.

Therefore the Lord, to maintain the character of the dispensation, makes the apostle not confer with flesh and blood, but immediately preach on his calling, and afterwards separates him merely to the particular work to which he was called, thus securing its underivative character, and that by the direct action of the Spirit. Its value was the energy of the Spirit of God, because of the glory to be revealed, and the heavenly character of the

dispensation which had its place in the glory, not here at all, and so ordered of God; otherwise apostolic authority is derived from laymen (in modern theory, self-ordained men), and the apostle's assertion of his apostolate falsified. But it was not; it was the Holy Ghost's separation of him to Himself for the work to which the Lord had called him, not the conferring a gift, as if his apostolate depended on that mission; for this the apostle denies at large in the Epistle to the Galatians, and passes by this going forth from Antioch entirely in the account of his mission which he gives to them, and it was not the derivation of authority; for this he is equally earnest to deny. In Paul, then, we have the founding of the service of this dispensation, resting on the fully recognised apostleship, but caused, in the way it is founded, to be entirely of a heavenly character, springing from the Lord known then in the glory, having its working and energy in the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and breaking in upon the derivative character of the apostolate in the Jews by every careful arrangement of God; and the laying on of hands made little of as regards the apostolate, and coming not from superior derivative authority, but entirely collaterally, that every link of the sort should be broken; and, we may add, failing as to its earthly position, the moment the energy of the Spirit failed, the moment the unstained godliness which kept out evil, and left the operations of the given Spirit free, failed. Because the witness of the glory among the Gentiles was not to take the place of the glory, any more than the witness of the resurrection among the Jews was to take the place of the resurrection-glory. And it was only a witness, and therefore shewn only to the apostles and teachers among the Jews, and Paul for the Gentiles, and having

been witnessed to, fails as regards holding any place here, though effectual by the Spirit to them that believe, that, abounding in hope through it, they might have an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, when He shall be manifested as the risen and glorified One, and sorrow and trial pass away. And though the filling up, as it were, was in the ascended glory, of which Paul was the special witness (and therefore he laboured more abundantly than they all, as the full testimony was to be given to the world in him, the continuous Gentile dispensation), yet though he sustained it by the energy of the Spirit during his life, he knew well that it would end then, that is, as thus corporately held together: “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them.”

It was not that God, in the word of His grace to which he commended them as able to build them up, would not both gather out, and sanctify souls; but he felt and well knew that Ichabod was written on the dispensation, as on every other, till He comes who could sustain it enduringly in the present power of a manifested life, Satan being bound from before Him. So it was among the Jews; the resurrection-denying Sadducees being raised against the testimony of that, as the self-righteous Pharisees against the ministry of the righteous One. So it was among the Gentiles, false teachers bringing into disrepute the energies of the Spirit of God, and thus devouring the flock, because of the feebleness of the shepherds. Oh how little does the church know the service of crying and tears, the humility of mind which accompanies the watching the fold of Christ

against the inroads of the enemy—of Satan. But it is gone. Yet there is One that is ever faithful, who, be the shepherds ever so cowardly, does not let His scattered sheep be plucked out of His hand.

To return to the subject. Let us turn to what we have afterwards, of the maintenance for a little season of the order of the church of God before the re-assertion of the human derivative claim came to take the place of the Spirit of God. Let us take a glance at another part of scripture connected with this—laying on of hands. The priesthood of Christ is the great characteristic of this dispensation,22 hereafter in glory manifested for joy and praise, now for the intercession and gifts of grace, still the same in person. It is ministering by the Spirit below, that the saints might be a witness to the world of what the power of it is in Christ, to the Father of what He was: they are in His place before the Father and before the world. And this is what is brought out in John 17, not the thing itself till the glory comes, and Christ appears, and we appear; but a witness of it by a supply of grace from Him who will appear, the fulness of both our place before the Father, and our place before the world, being in Christ.

Hence it is Paul (the Spirit as in his ministry) who addresses the Hebrews—not the ministry of circumcision, as speaking to them in their place, but one calling them out of that into the consciousness of the heavenly calling, speaking to them from the glory of the Son, sustaining them in the present failure of the dispensation in them, by the security of an enduring Melchisedec priesthood. “Wherefore,” says he, “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider Christ Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our

profession." Such an High Priest, as was not only harmless, undefiled, but separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, became such as these. "If he were on earth he should not be a priest." He is gone, not into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. But this was not all; for, as we have seen, when teaching the understanding of the mystery among the Gentiles, we find this ascending up on high was leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men; and "He gave," etc. So we find many of the worthies said to act by faith, in Hebrews n (the great point then of trial to the Christian Hebrews) testified of, as led by the Spirit, in their history in the Old Testament.

But this is not the point I rest on here, but the comparative use he makes of the priesthood in his Melchisedec character with the very circumstances here spoken of. "Wherefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us," he says, "go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith towards God, and of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment; and this we will do, if God permit." He then, from the fourth to the sixth, speaks of the things which are the proper portion of the church emerged out of Judaism, which was the word of the beginning of Christ—and that failure from this new portion is irremediable after such patience of God; and in the rest speaks therefore not of the blessings of the given Spirit, save as to the danger of apostasy, but indeed, while Aaronical intercession meanwhile subsisted, of what their portion under the Melchisedec

priesthood would be according to the word of the new covenant. Of this the Holy Ghost was present witness. It is not my purpose to open out this now; I refer to it to shew the contrast of what were the first principles, or the word of the beginning of Christ, and the going on to perfection—that is, the knowledge of the priesthood of Christ, the heavenly priesthood now witnessed to us by the presence of the Spirit. This is given in this epistle, on account of its object, merely in parenthesis, as the full Christian character of the dispensation and its danger of apostasy in chapter 6:4-6.

But we find thereby the way in which the Jewish elements are treated, not as though they had not their place, but the place they had explained; and they are Jewish elements. These they are: the dead, we admit, will be raised; eternal judgment, or guilt, more properly, will be; repentance from dead works is acknowledged to be needful; baptisms and laying on of hands we have heard of as existing; but they constitute not the glory and power of the dispensation. The exercise of the church's mind about them proves its return to Judaizing principles. The notion of derivative authority is a positive lapse into the order of the dispensation broken in upon by God, in its losing its Jewish character, and becoming the spiritual witness of the heavenly glory and fulness of Christ. Who is Paul's successor? I have heard of the successors of Peter, the direct and remarkable witness to the character of the association with derivative authority. It is all identified in the Gentile church with Peter, who was not the apostle of the Gentiles at all. It is the Judaizing of Gentilism, and the whole structure and fabric of the professing church rests upon this. Paul, as the apostle of the

uncircumcision, held the witness of the character of this dispensation. Where is his successor? Of what See was he head? Was it Rome, the source of the present derived authority? And of what character then is all this derived authority? Where is it in Scripture?

Let us see the facts a little further. It is not to be denied that Paul and the presbytery laid their hands on Timothy; and a gift was in Timothy by the laying on of Paul's hands. The same does not appear in Titus at all, neither was he circumcised, which Timothy was; and Timothy, it appears, also laid hands upon others, for he is desired to do it suddenly on no man. They were thus special temporary deputies of Paul for setting the churches in order in the things wanting, and appointing elders. That they were not permanent episcopal superintendents is clear, because when Paul passed by Ephesus, he addresses the elders or bishops there so as to demonstrate them not to be under the care of Timothy as from apostolic derived authority; and in the second epistle charges him.to come to him, as he does also Titus, to come to him at Nicopolis, wanting them to be with him. They were his chosen assistants in ordering the churches, not his successors in them, unless he himself was bishop of both. We find John subsequently exercising the care under Christ, apostolically, of the Ephesian and other churches in those parts—quite inconsistent with the notion of Timothy's episcopacy, derived from Paul. The energy of the Spirit then, using whom it thought fit in an authority of office, we find, in the conception of the church— derivative authority and jurisdiction nowhere. There was the conferring of gift; there was the ordering by those enabled to order; there was the appointment of elders in every city by those

enabled to do so; and the committal of doctrine to faithful men; there was every care of the church; but no apostolical derivative authority, except the false derivation of Peter, who was the apostle of the circumcision, not of the uncircumcision, and whom the Scriptures only so recognise.

I would only add a few words as to the term “ordain.” There is no such word in the Scriptures in the modern sense of the term. Laying on of hands, to have been used in given instances, I do not at all deny. We have seen an apostle ordained by laymen, afterwards conferring a gift by the same ordinance, and Timothy charged not to do it suddenly: but as we find the whole energy of the church continually and long carried on without reference to it, so the word translated “ordain” has never, in Scripture, any connection with laying on of hands. Used or not used, it does not so state it, foreseeing, I am persuaded, the apostasy of the latter day. In Acts 1:22, the expression is merely an insertion of the translators: see the original, where it merely is “must one of them be a witness of the resurrection.” The other passages are in Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5. In the one “chose” or “selected elders”; in the latter, “appoint.”

There is no evidence that Timothy was left for such purpose. The apostle states it to have been to guard doctrine, not for the purpose of appointing elders. It is a general instruction as to his conduct in the church, and it does not appear that laying on of hands was peculiar to any such office. It may have been used in it: they are never so connected in Scripture. When elders are spoken of, laying on of hands is not; when this is spoken of, they are not. It may have been used: there was no scriptural identification. Probably it had a much wider

scope. It was clearly used among the Jewish Christians for sickness and miracles, and by the apostle for conferring gifts.

Further, I would remark, that while the present care of the church was exactly what would be consistent with the looking for the coming of the Lord, which possessed the mind of the apostle, the arrangement of prospective provision by derivative authority for future ages was wholly inconsistent with it. When he was passing by Ephesus, in the consciousness that his personal care was closed, he warns the elders himself on their own responsibility, although, long before, Timothy had been left to watch the place (though it would appear he did not stay there long). But the charge to Timothy was doctrine.

All present care was as to the way in which they would wait for the Lord, and committal of trust to those called and gifted, where needed. But the arrangement of derivative authority would have been positive unbelief. Accordingly we find it broken among the Jews, where it had this character, never attempted among the Gentiles where the glory was manifested; now taken nominally from Peter, when he was gone who withstood these things to the face. Our present duty is every possible care of the church as far as gathered, and of the saints, which God by His Spirit may enable us to take; using (with all diligence, humility, and energy, with crying and tears, in which we may expect to use it) whatever He gives us, to keep out Satan and feed the flock of God, where we may be, or He send us; but to lean in constant dependence on Him for the constant supply of the Spirit of His grace, as our only ground of strength; and when we fail, commend them to God and to the word of His

grace, which is able to build them up, and give them an inheritance among them that are sanctified. He who knows this in spirit, will well know its sorrow, and how near it draws one to God. But all this is God's provision, not for the wickedness of man, but for that failure, which in man's foolishness shall cause all to centre in the glory of the Lord.

But there is one further point, with which we must close. To the mere laying on of hands, if done spiritually, I know of no objection; but reference of the heart to derivative authority has quite another character. It is Judaizing. It is, if insisted on, the principle of apostasy, as denying the power and calling of the Holy Ghost, or His competency to send, bless, and sanctify. Wherever we return to Jewish practice as an imposed necessity, we return to the idolatry of the world. There was a special sanction of worldly elements to a given purpose; and worldly elements, and glory, and honour had their place, while it was so ordered. The principles, of the human heart which sought them were dealt with on their own ground and terms, though in God's way; because, till the rejection of Christ, man and the world were not treated with as dead in trespasses and sins, as lying in wickedness, as at enmity with God; and riches, and honours, and worldly things accompanied the love of wisdom, and human principles were dealt with. But in the rejection of Christ, the truth was brought fully out to light: the system of the world was set aside as to all its elements, as evil; God's sanction to it in any form or sort ceased. Its friendship was enmity with God. It was convinced of sin, and righteousness, set up not there but in the heavens, hid with God, revealed to faith. Judaism had been the place of righteousness, but iniquity was

found in it; and, being set aside, its principles became merely the simple worldly elements, without any sanction of God at all, and with merely their own worldly character; and the return to them became apostasy, return to the mere evil world.

This is the apostle's statement, the force of which is by no means in general sufficiently estimated. Writing to the Galatians, he says, "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service to them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe," etc. That is, Gentiles become Christians, and looking to Jewish principles, were returning to their own old Gentile state: for what else was Judaizing now? It was simply joining the world, the ungodly world, which had not the Spirit of God in it, ending in the flesh. So the apostle argues in Colossians 2:19-23, especially verse 20. Wherever, then, we turn to what is Jewish (a right thing while God's work was of this world), we have the principle of apostasy in us (these things have the rudiments of the world in them), and we shall more or less join the world, which has not the Spirit, which is at enmity with God.

And when, I would ask, has the church looked to this derivative character as essential and necessary that it has not joined the world? Receiving the principle of the world into its bosom, it soon fell into its practice; and this is the character, the form of apostasy. And the absence or subversion of justification by faith, and maintaining the doctrine of works for salvation, derived authority, and the church in the world, have astonishingly gone together. However this may be—I

refer to it here merely as a fact—certainly the church so fell, at first gradually. Of this we may be sure, wherever we join any Jewish principle of ordinance now, as that which is our order, or obligatory on us, we join the world in its rejected state; for these are now demonstrated the profitless elements of the world, and nothing else; and the apostasy of the church is involved in principle. With whatever patience we may bear with those subject to them while they are under them, their imposition, as though needful, is the snare of Satan leading us back whence we are delivered; for our conversation is in heaven. History will prove it as to facts, to be the apostasy of the church, though the Spirit of God can alone prove or shew the principle. I do not reject conferred authority from God where it can be shewn in the grace of its exercise: derived authority from man I believe to be most evil, and to have apostasy in its character and principles.

The preceding observations may seem protracted; yet I think the importance of the principles warrants the deepest consideration of the subject. My own mind is very clear on it in principle, though I may have much to learn in detail. I have endeavoured, under the Lord's mercy, to confine myself to the principles, to hurt no one, the matter being not of controversy, but of deep and everlasting truth. It is a remarkable thing that—while almost all the churches more or less hang on derivative authority—where it is settled as a system, we may note, first, human derivation is its first basis as a principle; secondly, it is connected entirely with Peter, and succession from him; and in conferring the authority, it uses the words used by the Lord in

conferring it on His Jewish apostles, previous to His ascension.

22 Not of the church properly so-called—that is His body, one with Him, perfect in Him; but as a system set up on earth.

## On The Apostasy --What Is Succession A Succession Of?

I propose saying a few words on the very solemn subject of the apostasy of the dispensation, suggesting the scriptural statements concerning it, rather than making any comment.

This subject has been touched upon connected with the calling of Paul, with the raising up of an extraordinary messenger of grace upon Israel's rejection of the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the exalted Jesus. I purpose to advert now to the positive scriptural evidence of the apostasy; and I will merely retrace, with some additional circumstances, the previous point, which declared its apostasy in its first or Jewish organisation. The scriptures I would now refer to are in evidence of the plain fact of direct ecclesiastical apostasy, the revealed existence of that which determined the fate of the dispensation.

The rejection of the Lord Jesus really crowned the sin of the Jewish people—of man; but on the cross the Lord interposed by intercession, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do "; and to this expression of the gracious and blessed mind of the Lord the Holy Ghost replies, when by the mouth of Peter He says, "and now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers; repent ye therefore." That is, the Holy Ghost now bore testimony to the exaltation of Jesus to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. Hence all the testimony of Peter is to God's exaltation of the rejected Messiah, the Son of man. This testimony, as has been long since observed,

was finally rejected in the martyrdom of Stephen; and at this point the Jewish central successional order closed, and Paul, the chief volunteer and agent in carrying the active hatred of, and opposition to the testimony, into effect, is raised up to be a witness of the grace, which in long-suffering overruled it all and surpassed it all. Thus he was at once a messenger to the Gentiles of sovereign grace, and of the union of the church with Christ; and the type of the calling of a remnant of the Jews, by this sovereign grace, in the latter day: in respect of one, designating himself the chief of sinners; as regards the second, first called—or all long-suffering in him first shewn forth. He was taken into a solitary place of sovereign grace, to shew the glory of it to others—the place of the union withal of the church now with Christ.

To his testimony the Jews scattered everywhere opposed themselves. They not only refused the testimony themselves, but opposed its being carried to others. Of this Bar-jesus is the remarkable expression and therefore grace here ceases, and judicial blindness is put on him for a season. As the apostle expresses it in his meet judgment on them, “forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.”23 This manifestly closed the scene, and many were the sorrowful consequences.

The actings of Satan, by the instrumentality of Jewish principles now passed away, in corrupting the church, must be familiar to any one acquainted with the perfect word of God. Human righteousness, ordinances, succession, and ceremonial observance of times, connecting spiritual religion with human imagination, form the marked characteristics of this corruption of the

truth—perverting, even in the apostle's days, whole houses. Not the only characteristics, but the chief in principle. Of other formal ones I might mention tradition and the centralisation of religion upon earth, instead of the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, now associating all with heaven, Jesus being only known there by the power of a mission not of man nor by man. But upon this I cannot enlarge here.

But while I have thus cursorily referred to the order and progress of the entire subversion of the first and earliest organisation, or proposed organisation, of the church, by the rejection of the testimony on which it was founded, I purpose going a great deal farther as to the extent of statement on this point. And while my references will be very simple, they seem to me to involve a principle of the last possible importance; and while directing the judgment through a deep sense of our present condition, to guide it into freedom, and security from the apostate snare, now widely spreading its evil force, of successional ordinances: for if the Scriptures plainly testify the apostasy of the dispensation, that which professes to provide for and secure its successional continuance must be a he of the enemy. This is the point now before us. My evidences of it will be few and simple.

I would clear the point by a few brief explanations of what I mean; endeavouring, though it be connected with many most interesting subjects, to keep it as simple as possible. In the first place, I would remark, that the responsibility of man, or any set of men under any dispensation of God, is quite distinct from the salvation of any individuals of that dispensation. The confounding of these things renders the apprehension of the dealings

of God with man impossible: either the security of the Lord's faithfulness, or the responsibility of man in and by any given economy, is lost. Adam was responsible in innocence. His individual salvation stood clearly on other ground. Noah was responsible for the ordering of his house and family (we may say, then, the world) in holy government. The failure of this, though producing most important results, has nothing to do with Noah's salvation. In a word, if God deals in a process of government here for the manifestation of His character, this and the salvation of individuals, while that process is going on, are quite distinct; though the conduct of the saved may be guided and formed by the dispensation here below.

Nay, so decided is this distinction, it is just where the dispensation entirely fails, that the faithfulness of the saved remnant is most conspicuously manifest. What judge was like Samuel, when Israel failed under that ordering of God's people and God gave them a king in His anger? Thus Israel as a whole, under the law, were put as a dispensation under the responsibility of its observance, and nationally failed, though a remnant all through were of God and saved.

Every dispensation has some special deposit, so to speak, entrusted to it, by which its fidelity is tried. And, as it seems to me, every one of them will be made good, and God glorified in them, in Jesus, on the proved failure of man in each. Thus, not to go to other examples, the law—Israel made the golden calf. The law will be written in their hearts hereafter. The dispensation of the Holy Ghost's power, or the manifestation of Christ glorified by the Holy Ghost the Comforter, as against the world which rejected Him, has its responsibility too. It is true,

effectual salvation and the grounds of it have been more plainly brought out, so that we can more easily appropriate real and eternal privileges to those who are heirs of them; because the Holy Ghost does manifest them, and acting in power, gathers them for Christ for heavenly glory; and this was not true of what preceded it. The proper manifestation, if everything had been exactly as it ought to be, was of an elect nation, all of whom in any case were not necessarily saved; not of a church chosen in Jesus from any and every nation. That was formal and by descent, this by power. But though this be so, it does not take away from the dispensation itself (as a given sphere of the operations of God, in which all was to keep its first estate) a place of responsibility, and a deposit given to it. The greatest strength and very essence of an apostasy is to affirm of its apostate condition, in which it is the special object of judgment, the security which belongs to the elect congregation of God. It was just the ruin of Israel: it is easier, if not more fatal, in Christianity.

Further, I would remark, that the dispensation is judged on its responsibility, while individuals may be saved by grace. I have further to add, that, however great the patience, the first departure is fatal and the ground of judgment, whatever the growth of wickedness into ripeness may be; and, lastly, that the dispensation of the profession of Christianity, or the name of Christ, stands in this condition; and that the scripture never recognises a recovering from such a state, whatever through mercy the “lengthening of tranquility” may be; for the first failure is departure from God, and proves the existence of evil in the flesh, and the manifestation that man is in question, and that all is gone in principle. As a

corroborative fact, it is solemnly interesting to see that the failure has in every instance been immediate on the responsibility's existing.

Christianity not being a system of formal enactment, and its requirements and powers only of spiritual perception, the evidence of its departure is less palpable and itself also the object of only spiritual perception. But Israel itself could say, "Wherein have we despised the Lord," and Wherein should we return? and "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these": and even disciples say, "Master, behold what goodly stones and buildings are here"; though Israel had broken the covenant and gone away backwards, and that from the beginning, and was filling up the measure of her iniquity, that all righteous blood should come upon her. I shall very briefly trace this just now.

This dealing of God being on responsibility and in justice, it is according to the professing mass (the body at large or their leaders) that the judgment takes place; the security of the saints being untouched by it. Moreover, the refuge of the saints is out of the system judged, because an untoward generation; and their place of blessing, the dispensation which supervenes on the judgment of that from which they have been delivered. I will add, that knowledge of impending judgments is always adequately afforded to the saints to flee from the wrath to come.

Let us remember that the Lord is "slow to anger"; and that in the midst of outrageous provocations, and himself the subject of much of them—the reproaches of the Lord falling upon him—poor Jeremiah could appeal to God how he had stood in the gap to turn away the

indignation from them; till the Lord said to him, “Pray not for this people,” and the indignation took its course. For intercession is always the place for him who has the mind of God to make a way for God’s love, till the place for intercession is closed.

If some, attaching everything to the final salvation of the elect, say, if this be not affected by it all the rest is immaterial and curious, and they do not know anything about dispensations; I answer, that the salvation of the elect is not the great end of any Christian’s thoughts, but the divine glory; and that God has been pleased to glorify Himself and display His character in these dispensations for the instruction of the church; and that if the church casts it aside, they are casting aside the instruction which God has afforded of His ways. They are making themselves wise without God, and wiser than He, for He has thought fit for His glory to instruct us in these things. I will take only one example (though there are other remarkable ones, as Noah), because we are morally set on the very same ground by Scripture, the history of Israel as the elect nation.

Israel was set at Sinai on the condition of their obedience to the law. This the apostle assures us did not touch the promise made to Abraham, etc., and that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance as to them nationally. But God glorified Himself, for all that, in all His dealings with them, and they happened to them for ensamples to us on whom the ends of the ages are come. Obedience to God according to the law was the ground they were set on. They made the golden calf. Their apostasy was complete. Long was the patience of God— various His dealings with them in perfect mercy; but the irremediable evil of human nature was there,

and displayed itself the rather through it all until they both rejected the Son in humiliation and refused the testimony of the Holy Ghost to His exultation at the right hand of power. But then God, having thus dealt in vain by these external dealings of testimony on man, recurs to the original sin in which the apostasy was first shewn (just indeed as all the sins of the human heart, aggravated as they are, are but the evidence of its first and total departure from God). “Have ye served me, O ye house of Israel,” says the Spirit in Stephen, quoting and applying a more ancient testimony, “by the space of forty years in the wilderness? yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, the star of your god Remphan, images which ye made to worship them, and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.” They had consummated it towards Jesus, proving themselves irreconcilable, but the apostasy was complete in the wilderness, however “long suffering” God may have been.

“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off,” says the apostle to the Gentiles, as taking the place of the branches cut off. That is, the church, as a subject of dispensation here, is subject to the same responsibility as Israel of old: and would be cut off on its failure.

Now I shall proceed to shew from Scripture, that it is revealed that it would fail; and revealed that it has failed. It is perfectly clear that the doctrine of succession, and the maintenance of grace by succession, if this be so, is an awful departure from the truth of God, founded in falsehood and available only to prop up the

character of what God judges as the worst form of evil, departure from what is good.

It is not for me to say what patience God may have, or how He may use the intercession of His people for the protracting the time of mercy; certainly He is perfect in wisdom in this.

It alters, it is manifest, the whole position of the soul to recognise that we live in an apostasy hastening to its final consummation, instead of a church or dispensation which God is sustaining by His faithfulness of grace.

First, then, it is evident that the condition of apostasy is supposed as to this dispensation in the passage cited from Romans 11, and made to depend on continuing in God's goodness. There is no promise of revival. It is purely on continuance in God's goodness; making failure, as I have said, ruinous without hope of recovery. God's goodness, in which they were placed, being departed from by man's evil, God never departs from His own goodness. It might suffice to say, that professing Christendom is anything but a continuance in the goodness in which the church was planted; nay, the true people of God have not continued in it, for had they, such a state of things never would have been; but when it comes, they suffer and are involved in it, though they began it not. God's people are scattered and worldly and divided. Compare their state with John 17 and Acts 2 and 4; and the saint that loves Jesus and the church will soon recognise the sad difference.

But the testimonies are far more precise than this. First, generally, "as it was in the days of Noe and the days of Lot, so should it be in the day when the Son of man should be revealed." Clearly then there was to be an

awful apostasy before the close, and the state of the apostasy was the state of the dispensation at the close. Again, “that day shall not come except there be a falling away—the apostasy—first.” I say not yet when, but before the day come, the apostasy comes. This leaves little room for a day of blessedness between. This, to the apostle’s mind, was to precede the day of the Lord, an apostasy, not a period of blessedness. If men say, “It has come,” I dispute not, but I say then cutting off is the consequence, not restoration,24 as we have seen from Romans 11. And the promise of blessing and revival is unfounded, though the remnant may be revived and gathered from an evil day.

But there is more than this. “In the last days perilous times shall come, men shall be lovers of their ownselves,” etc. If this passage be examined, it is a very solemn and express testimony of the Spirit of God, of the return of professed Christendom to a state such as heathenism was, as described by the Spirit in Romans 1. Here the Spirit speaks not of the heathen world, that in the last days it would be so; the Spirit had already proved it was so; but in the last days it would be so of those who had the form of godliness, but denied the power. From such they were to turn away.

Again, “ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” And this, note, not by the moral evil of the world, but by apostasy: “they went out from us,” whereby it was proved they were not of us. This proves that in John’s time the apostasy had set in, whereby the Christians knew, said he, that it was the last time; not by infidelity (that might condemn individually, and believers he what they ought); but by apostasy (that proved the

last time should come)—not wicked people, but antichrists. For the Spirit spoke expressly, that in the latter times some were to depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils. Not only so. The mystery of iniquity already worked. There was a hindrance to the manifestation of the man of sin, but the principles and mystery of iniquity already worked: and it was only a hindrance which impeded the awful result, which when removed, the great agent and instrument of this crowning iniquity, everywhere manifested, was to be revealed, whom the Epiphany of the Lord's presence was to destroy.

The passages I have hitherto cited prove:—

First, the liability of the dispensation to apostasy, as Romans 11, itself sufficient to teach the result to those acquainted with human nature. Others, as 1 John 2, shew that antichrists were already come; whereby Christians knew that it was then the last time, because evil was found to have its worst form, and source from the bosom of Christianity itself.

The evil itself is characterised in the two epistles to Timothy: first, as departing from the faith, but this, it must be observed, chiefly in practical points; and secondly, in the general result of a character analogous to heathenism in its moral evils, but, though the power was denied, maintaining the form of godliness. Besides these, we have the testimony from the Thessalonians, that the day of the Lord would not come without the apostasy coming first; and that the mystery of iniquity was already then at work. To these we may add the testimony of the Spirit by Peter, that scorn of the

expectation of the Lord's second coming would be characteristic of the scoffers of these perilous days.

All these passages concur to shew that the result of the dispensation would be "apostasy," "perilous times," "departure from the faith"; and that the mystery of iniquity, the principles of evil which produced this, were already at work. The present effects then were different: partly a hidden spirit at work, hindered as yet, in its great public manifestation in Satanic power; partly an open apostasy, and going out from the saints—too pure then, too assiduously watched over by apostolic vigilance and spiritual power to allow, when assuming an open form of evil, its continuance among the saints; partly, as we shall see, not by going out, but by the creeping in of corrupt men. But, however manifested in present effects, these are but the signs of a principle at work which should be consummated in the man of sin—of a principle which involved the dispensation in apostasy and excision, whatever the gracious patience of God: a principle then operating, and thereby affording an opportunity to the apostles to forewarn the church; and by their authority enabling us to say, that the last times were then come, though there might be a prolonging of mercy.

This assertion, that the last times were then come, is of all possible importance. There was a moral departure from God in the bosom of Christianity. The effects of this might be stayed by the hand of the apostle, but forced the apostle to say the last times were come. Theologians may comment on such an expression, and say that the last times mean the times of Messiah. But then the presence of Messiah would prove that; but the proof of the last times here is that, after that, antichrists are

come: they were characteristically and really the last times of the dispensation. Men had slept; the enemy had sowed tares; and it must be left as it was till judgment, as regards the place it held in the world.

It is admitted that the present effects and manifestations of the apostasy were then different in form and extent from what they will assume when judged. The apostolic energy, and spiritual life in the body of the church itself on which that energy acted, either cast out the evil or suppressed it; just as the zeal of an untainted Moses rescued Israel from the present effects of the golden calf, and destroyed the present exhibition of the apostasy. But it was not the less really come in, though the patience of God was not yet exhausted by the rejection of His Son. And the apostle was well aware, and the Holy Ghost gives us the expression of His assurance, that it was the presence of the apostolic energy which arrested its display. “I know that after my decease,” is the sorrowful testimony of the parting apostle; as Peter also warned them that false teachers would arise among them. Even in the lifetime of the devoted apostle, he had to say, “All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s”: a state leaving easy room for the evil and mischief to introduce itself. While men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares.

There remains yet one passage which I have not hitherto quoted, which (as the passage of John has shewn us that the last times—whatever their prolongation—were already come) identifies the objects of the revelation as then existing with those who are objects of judgment at the close, on the Lord’s return.

The book of Jude may be taken as the history or revelation of apostasy. The very commencement of the epistle marks the necessity which attracted the testimony of the Spirit of God. “Beloved,” says the apostle, “when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints; for there are certain men crept in unawares, who were of old ordained unto this condemnation.”

This is most distinct. The evil anticipated by the counsels of God had crept in by the neglect of man already in the days of the apostles. While men slept, the enemy had come and sown tares. This infected the susceptibility of the church’s conscience; “though ye once knew this,” says the apostle, refers to the excision of the whole body save two, in warning to them; and likens the resulting condition of the church to the angels which kept not their first estate, and to Sodom and Gomorrah. He then intimates to them the different (and, I would add, in some respects progressive) characters of die apostasy (though the entrance of the succeeding ones does not neutralise the former): natural evil and enmity, religious corruption for gain, and open hostility to the priesthood and royalty of Christ, on the part of the religious teachers of the people—Cain, Balaam, and Core. Having thus traced the forms and characters of the apostasy from beginning to end, the apostle gives us the all-important truth, that what had then already found its way into the church was the direct object of the judgment of Christ at His coming, as it had been prophesied from the beginning—the consummation of iniquity, in the apostasy of the last form of God’s

goodness, previous to the coming of the Son of man in glory. Enoch, we are taught by the Holy Ghost, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with myriads of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them—Enoch prophesied of these. Those then, to whom the prophecy of the Lord's coming to judment applied, were already manifest. As we have said, the patience of God might be long, and has been not slack concerning His promise, but long-suffering to us-ward; but the apostasy was complete in the eye of God; Christianity had not kept its first estate.

There is another feature remarkable in this, that it was the coming in of these, not the going out, which marked the judicial object of wrath and excision. They were spots in their feasts of charity, feasting with the Christians. They exalted themselves especially (Jude 19), distinguished themselves, as the Pharisees among the Jews, but did not leave the body; they were in danger and certain ruin by being in it.

The judgment of excision then was only in prophecy; but the condition to be judged was actually in existence, so that the apostle could say Enoch prophesied of these. Their number might be different, the church might have more completely forgotten how the great body of Israel were cut off in the wilderness; but the evil was there, and the judgment already pronounced. The apostles had even told before "that there should be mockers in the last time."

The scriptures we have already cited shew, first, the warning of the possibility of failure and excision; secondly, the prophetic declaration that there would be

an apostasy: and thirdly, that those positively designated from the earliest stages as the objects of judgment, as such apostasy, were, if not matured in their effects, already there; so that the ever watchful Spirit of God could descry, designate, and describe them; and evince that the mystery was already at work—the evil to be judged already there in existence.

That which remains of God's word is the warning or the immediate threatening of excision, and the account of a far different scene. Not the Father's intercourse with His children to instruct, warn, and comfort but the revelation of subsequent evil, and the arranging government of the world in the hands of the Lamb on the throne; when the church was gone from the scene below, and could no longer be the subject of His judgment or His care.

If the testimony of the texts we have cited be such, there cannot be a more solemn consideration for God's children— the failure from the outset, through man's folly and evil, of the economy of the church in the world. Further, the whole organisation of succession and its co-ordinate ordinances of church-maintenance take their true place. Instruments of blessing in power have become the lever of apostasy against the children of God. The doctrine of succession, and all its accompaniments, becomes the stamp and mark of recognised and sanctioned, because perpetuated, apostasy; for if the church has failed, as these texts declare, the provision of its perpetuation becomes the provision for the perpetuation of the failure, and the maintenance of the object of the Lord's sure judgment.

I press the testimony of the epistle of Jude to this point. My object here is not to shew the degree of maturity to which the apostasy may be generally or locally arrived, but the fact of its existence from the commencement in the judgment and by the revelation of God, applicable to the entire course and condition of the dispensation as a whole; and instructing us in the true character of pretension to succession and continuance.

May the Lord give eyes and ears to His children, that they may see what concerns His church as He sees it.

23 The final testimony of this judgment is Acts 28. I allude to Bar-jesus merely as the revealed expression of the ultimate ratio or occasion of it.

24 And what is succession a succession of?

## The Apostasy Of The Successive Dispensations

Communion with God—communion with God in a new nature, being made, as the apostle teaches us, partakers of a divine nature, is both that in which eternal blessedness must have its spring, and the source of all true knowledge. Here God, through grace, can communicate with us in the intelligence of the same delights, and the communication of the same interests. The ultimate provision made for this is the incarnation; and the Lord instructs in grace (renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created us) in all those elements of the knowledge of good and evil, by which the value and excellence and the divine provision of the Lord Jesus are apprehended and adequately esteemed, at least in principle and desire. We learn it humbly by the necessity of evil in us: but we learn it holily, because we know the extent of the evil only by the infiniteness of the good: so only indeed can it be known; so has God blessedly provided for the knowledge of it for good. Thus He knows it. Thus those that are made partakers of the divine nature know it in their measure. This, however, we have to learn in its details, in the various dispensations which led to or have followed the revelation of the incarnate Son in whom all the fulness was pleased to dwell— the obedient man, God manifested, the suffering Saviour, the exalted Righteous One; many, many principles brought out in the exhibition of weakness and apparent exhibitions of divine power, having no settled rule, but all finding their solution in the sufferings and revelation of God in the Lord Jesus

Christ. The detail of the history connected with these dispensations brings out many most interesting displays, both of the principles and patience of God's dealings with the evil and failure of man; and of the workings by which He formed faith on His own thus developed perfections. But the dispensations themselves all declare some leading principle or interference of God, some condition in which He has placed man, principles which in themselves are everlastingly sanctioned of God, but in the course of those dispensations placed responsibly in the hands of man for the display and discovery of what he was, and the bringing in their infallible establishment in Him to whom the glory of them all rightly belonged. It is not my intention to enter into any great detail, but to shew simply how, in every instance, there was total and immediate failure as regarded man, however the patience of God might tolerate and carry on by grace the dispensation in which man has thus failed in the outset; and further, that there is no instance of the restoration of a dispensation afforded us, though there might be partial revivals of it through faith.

The paradisaical state cannot properly perhaps be called a dispensation in this sense of the word; but as regards the universal failure of man, it is a most important instance. It is too plain, too sadly known, to require much proof in detail, important as shewing that no condition of man set him free from the prevailing art of the great adversary. When he was innocent and untainted, surrounded by every mercy, and at the head of all blessing, he fell immediately. The man not deceived but led astray, the woman deceived and in the transgression, and, though this has doubtless a higher reference, yet, describes the fact and the double

character of error. As it was to be shewn here in principle, that man in nature could not stand, the first thing we read is of his fall, the first act consequent upon the responsibility in which he was placed, after his being set at the head of creation, and his wife given to him; in a word, after responsibilities were established, and his glory and blessing full. Corruption, disorder, violence, were the consequences of this, until the Lord destroyed the first world created (during the time of His patience an elect seed having been preserved in testimony and patience).

Here dispensations, properly speaking, begin. On the first, Noah, I shall be very brief: restraint and godliness should have characterised it—the government which would have repressed corruption and violence. But the first thing here found is the saved patriarch drunk, and his son shamefully mocking him, for which the curse justly descends upon him. This issued in idolatry; Joshua 24.

The first account after his call we have of faithful Abraham, which as a minuter circumstance I also pass briefly over, is Genesis 12:13, “Say, I pray thee: thou art my sister, that it may be well with me for thy sake, and my soul shall live because of thee”; and plagues because of him in whom the families of the earth were to be blessed. As regards man, under the calling of grace, we find shameful failure.

The history of the children of Israel is one scene of “a stiff-necked and rebellious people.” But to take up the point of the dispensation—obedience under the law by which life was to be: this obedience they undertook; and Moses returned to receive the various orderings of

divine appointment as under it, and the two tables of testimony. But this dispensation, which met the failure of the world, which had gods many and lords many, and in form was to bring righteousness in the flesh, came to nothing in man's hand, before the order of it was brought down from the mount, or they had received in detail the record of what they had undertaken. They made, while Moses was in the mount, a golden calf, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of Egypt." The spring and foundation-stone of all the commandments and ordinances was gone. They had turned their glory into the similitude of a calf which eateth hay. The ordinance or dispensation of priesthood failed in like manner. Before Aaron and his sons had gone out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, because the anointing oil of the Lord was upon them, Nadab and Abihu had already offered strange fire and been consumed before the Lord. The sons had not eaten the sin offering in the holy place, and the blood of it was not brought in within the holy place, as was commanded. The Lord spared them, but the service had failed in its very outset. And the Lord also spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the Lord and died; and the Lord said unto Moses, speak unto Aaron, thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil. The consequence was, that the garments of glory and beauty were never worn by the high priest save at his consecration. For he was to wear them only on going into the holy place within the veil, and his going in being now only on the day of atonement, he was desired withal on that day to come in other though holy garments. Thus failed the law—thus failed the priesthood, as all else, however God might carry it on in

patience and mercy for a time, “till there was no remedy.”25 The kingly dispensation failed in the same way as did the nation under the previous ordering which made way for the king (see Judges 2), the Lord having failed in nothing; Joshua 23:14. David and Solomon having exhibited the royalty in victory and peace, Rehoboam and Jeroboam are but the witnesses of its utter failure, patience and mercy still going on, till the provocations of Manasseh set aside all hope of recovery or way of mercy in that dispensation. The same is true of universal rule transferred to the Gentiles: Nebuchadnezzar, the golden head, sets up the golden image, persecutes the faithful, and is turned into the image of a beast for his pride.

The rejection of our blessed Lord proved that no present mercy and grace, no present interference of God in goodness here, would meet the wilful and persevering enmity of the human heart, but only shewed it in its true light. But this, never being set up as a dispensation, but only the manifestation of His Person (to faith), I pass by. The last we have to notice, in a humbled sense of sin in us, is the present, where we are apt to take our ease in the world, as necessarily secure, but which, and the sin of which, the Lord sees and recognises, takes as much notice of, though not openly, as of others—the dispensation of the Spirit. Much has been said, with strong objection to it, as to the apostasy or failure of this dispensation.

The results are but too plain. If we believe that the exhibitions of the Spirit’s power and presence, in the second and fourth chapters of Acts, were gladsome and well-pleasing to the Lord, if the blessed Spirit was right in these effects—and who blasphemingly and in the

darkness of his own soul dare to say He was not?—then is the present picture of Christendom just as opposite as one thing well can be from another. They have not kept their first estate. The patience and mercy, and sure grace of God has still kept up a witness to Himself through the mediation of Christ, it is true. So it was in every dispensation; but this did not alter or prevent the result of the apostasy. And the facts shew us that it was ever at the outset the failure or apostasy took place; and that it was patience and grace, which bore with and carried it on, but never undid the result of the first failure. So to our shame has it been in Christianity. The state of the seven churches, I think, would shew this sufficiently to have been the case, and the way in which John was left at the close, to awaken the threats of judgment against a declining church. Where was Paul to hold all in vigour and beauty for the coming of the Lord, presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus? He had to confess at the close of his career, “I have none likeminded who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.”

Such was the result of apostolic labour; and the history of the book of Revelation, the testimonies of Peter and Jude, as well as the warnings of John and Paul, also shew that this would be the result of Christianity, according to the solemn sentence of the apostle, “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; on thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” But we may trace the immediateness of this failure more actually and definitely in circumstances to which the attention of the church seems little directed. When the Lord was parting from the disciples, He gives them the

commandment, “Go ye and disciple all nations.” Where is the fulfilment of this by the apostles whom He had chosen? This was their special commission from Him, as risen and having all power in heaven and earth. The principle and value of the dispensation could not be altered. But where is the fulfilment by the twelve apostles? Scripture affords it not. There is no account of the twelve in Scripture going into all the world and preaching the gospel to every creature: nothing which Scripture recognises as the accomplishment of this command. This in itself would be sufficient to show that the command on which the dispensation hung was, in the revealed testimony of God, unfulfilled by those to whom it was committed.

But I further find (contrary to the word, “when they persecute you in one city, flee ye to the next”) that on the persecution which arose about the matter of Stephen, they were all scattered abroad except the apostles. But the testimony is not merely negative, for I find, in extraordinary grace, a new arrangement entirely made—an apostle of the Gentiles raised up, entirely distinct: “one born out of due time”; “not of man, nor by man”; who was neither apostle with them, nor from them, but asserts, as he proved, his own independent qualifications. And the Acts of the Apostles, as to ministry, are the acts of Peter, as one in whom God was mighty to the circumcision, and it was agreed that he should go to the circumcision, and Paul and Barnabas to the Gentiles; and so the acts of Paul, as one in whom the same God was mighty towards the uncircumcision. That is, we find an express special office of apostle to the Gentiles, and whatever work was done of the commission, “Go ye into all nations” (Gentiles) was

done, as presented to us in Scripture, actually by somebody else specially and extraordinarily raised up for the purpose. Thus, whatever grace and power from Him that was glorified might effect, this dispensation as well as any other failed and broke off in the very outset; and in point of fact the gospel has never been preached in all the world, nor all nations discipled to this day, but the church which was gathered has departed from the faith of the gospel, and gone away backward, so as to be as bad or worse than the heathen.

But the point which is proved in this is not merely that it is in a bad state now, but that like all others it broke down in the commencement—no sooner fully established than it proved a failure. This does not touch upon the faithfulness of God, but exalts it, as in the case of the Jews, where their lie abounded to the glory of God. The remnant have been preserved all through, and according to the measure of grace and faith have prospered, or have been raised up from depression according to the counsels of God; but the dispensation was gone. We belong to a better glory. Nor, this being brought in as the object of desire, can the believer seek other or old things and earthly arrangements. And as he cannot desire, so neither does Scripture present the restoration of a dispensation; it never justifies its actual condition; and though grace and faith may, as I have said, effect revivals during the long-suffering of God, the dispensation, as such, is actually gone, that the glory of the principle contained in it may shine forth in the hands of Messiah. The attempt to set this dispensation on another footing, as to its continuance, than those dispensations which have failed already, not only shews ignorance of the principles of God’s dealings, for the

calling of God was always by grace true (and if it were it never could make way for that which is to come under Messiah), but it is actually negatived by the assertion, that it stands on the same ground as to this with the Jewish— “if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off.”

When He is come who can bind Satan himself, so that his power in the world shall be set aside, and not merely the testimony of the Lord’s power maintained there, then shall there be continuance, until, for the accomplishment of the purposes of God, and the final separation of evil and good, he be let loose again for a little season. And the close of all dispensation, and the end of all question and title of authority shall come, and, all being finished, God shall be all in all without question and without failure. How the glory of God and our consequent blessing in these things is increased and enhanced might be very plainly shewn, as it is indeed just declared by the apostle; but if the fact be recognised and its truth established as before the Lord, it may suffice now.

Reference to the second chapter of Galatians will confirm and establish the point historically as to the present dispensation, where not only is the fact stated of Paul having the ministry of the Gentiles, as Peter of the circumcision; but it was actually agreed on their conference, consequent upon the grace given, that Paul and Barnabas should go to the uncircumcision; and James, and Cephas, and John should go to the circumcision. And so far was the apostle’s mind under Judaising influence, that it required a positive fresh revelation to induce him to go into company with a Gentile at all, and even after this he would not eat when

certain came from James. In fact the Gentile dispensation, as a distinct thing, took its rise on the death of Stephen, the witness that the Jews resisted the Holy Ghost: as their fathers did, so did they.

25 Prophecy was in fact evidence of the failure of the dispensation as well as of God’s patience under it. Blessed to a remnant, it recalled to Moses and prophesied of Messiah. (See the last verses of Malachi.)

## On Lay Preaching

The question of lay preaching is one of the greatest importance, and one in which, it is obvious, the interests of the church are deeply concerned; because, if God give His Spirit to laymen for the purpose, there is positive loss in the hindrance, and the Spirit of God is grieved. The point to be proved by those who are opposed to it is this, either that no laymen have the Spirit of God in testimony; or that, having it, the sanction of man is necessary for its exercise. I do not purpose here a general investigation of the principles of the subject, but merely to inquire whether laymen are entitled to preach, if the Lord give them opportunity; or, whether there be any human sanction needful for their doing so. I affirm that there is not; and that no such sanction can be proved to be necessary from Scripture; and that no such sanction was therein afforded.

The question is not, whether all laymen are individually qualified; but, whether as laymen they are disqualified, unless they are what is commonly called ordained. I say, commonly called, because the word, used in Scripture, does not in the original convey what it does to an English ear at present. I affirm that no such ordination was a qualification to preach in the days of scriptural statement. I do not despise order; I do not despise pastoral care—I love it where it really exists, as that which savours in its place of the sweetest of God’s services. Though it may be exercised sometimes in a manner not to our present taste or thought, a good shepherd will seek the scattered sheep. But I confine myself to a simple question— the assertion that laymen

ought not to preach without episcopal or other analogous appointment. My assertion is, that they are entitled; that they did so in Scripture; were justified in doing so, God blessing them therein; and that the principles of Scripture require it, assuming of course here that they are qualified of God; for the question here is not competency to act, but title to act if competent. Neither do I despise herein (God forbid that I should do so26) the holy setting apart, according to godliness, to any office such as are competent by those that have authority to do so.

Let us see what Scripture says upon the subject. The question can only arise as to their speaking in the church, or oat of the church. These admitted, all anomalous cases will readily be agreed in. And first, in the church. And here I remark that the directions in 1 Corinthians 14 are entirely inconsistent with the necessity of ordination to speak. There is a line drawn there, but it is not “if ordained or unordained.” “Let your women keep silence in the churches” —a direction which never could have had place, were the speaking confined to a definitely ordained person, but takes quite another ground; and which implies directly, not that it is right for every man to speak, but that there was preclusion of none because of their character as laymen. Women were the precluded class: there the line was drawn. If men had not the gift of speaking, of course they would be silent, if they followed the directions there given. The apostle says, “Every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation.” Does he say none ought to speak but one ordained? No; “Let all things be done unto edifying.” That is the grand secret, the grand rule—

“in a tongue by two, or at the most by three, and by course, and interpret.” Prophets two or three, etc. “For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.” “For God,” etc. “Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience.”

We have then a distinction, not of ordained and unordained, but of those who from their character—women—are not permitted to speak, and the rest are; and directed in what order to do so, and the ground of distinction stated. And this is God’s plan of decency and order. For the rest they were all to speak, that all might learn, and all be comforted; not all to speak at once, not all to speak every day, but all as God led them, according to the order there laid down, and as God was pleased to give them ability, for the edifying of the church. I apply all this simply and exclusively to the question of laymen speaking; and I assert that there was no such principle recognised as that they should not, but the contrary.

It will be said, I know, that these were the times of extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; but this is a false view of the case. Do they mean to argue that ordination did not begin as a distinctive title till after the departure of the Spirit of God? Moreover, the Spirit of God does not justify, by systematic rules, breaking through His own order: it would be most mischievous to say He did. But the case was not one of the prerogative of spiritual gifts, but of order; for women had spiritual gifts, as we read elsewhere, and directions are given for their exercise; but they were not to use them in the church, because it was out of order—not comely. But there was no hint that

any of the men were not, but the contrary, because it was not out of order. Aptness to teach may be a very important qualification for a bishop; but it cannot be said from Scripture to be disorderly for a layman to speak in the church, if God have given him ability. Besides, though these extraordinary gifts may have ceased, I by no means admit that the ordinary gifts for the edification of the church, of believers, have ceased.

On the contrary, I believe they are the instrument, the only real instrument of edification; nor do I see why, on principle, they should not be exercised in the church, or why the church has not a title to the edification derived from them. If I were to speak of lay preaching, I should be referred to the orderly way in which Christ had given, in His church, some apostles, etc. Now, unless one man centres all these in one person by virtue of ordination, I do not see how it applies. I read, Some, one; some, another— "the Head, Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, to the edifying of itself in love." And I read, that there are given, one the eye, the other the foot, the other the ear, that there might be no schism in the body. And if we have lost many and ornamental members, it is no reason why we should cut off the rest; the word of wisdom, or the word of knowledge, or the like. If the Spirit of God be clean gone out of the church how came that about? Was it when laymen spoke, or office was maintained?

It will then be said, they may do it out of, but not in, the church. Why not? Thus far, then, for speaking in the church. I advocate no system. I mourn over the

departure of many of the comely parts, on which God set comeliness. I take these scriptures as scriptural evidence, that the notion of laymen speaking in the church being wrong, has not the Scriptures to rest on. I speak not here of elders, or appointed teachers— their value or not. I speak merely of the one point, the wrongness of a layman speaking in the church as such. If we are told of the danger arising from all teaching, I admit it at once. But we are warned against it, not by wrongness as regards office, or its effect merely on others; but as one of the things in which, as evil will come out, so the remedy is applied to the spirit from which it flows: “My brethren, be not many teachers, for so shall ye heap to yourselves greater condemnation.” But the warning still again shews, that there was no such restriction of office as is now supposed, for it would have been, ‘You have no business to teach at all, you are not ordained.’ But, no; the correction was turned to moral profit, not to formal distinction of pre-eminent office.

But it comes to be more important out of the church; because it precludes the testimony of the gospel by a vast number of persons, who may have faithfully borne it to others. Let us inquire the scriptural facts. In the first place, then, all the Christians preached—went everywhere preaching the word; Acts 8:4. Some critics have endeavoured to elude this plain passage by saying, that this is speaking, which a layman may do. The short answer is—it is not. It is “evangelising the word.” And we read elsewhere, that “the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.” Now, unless all the church were ordained—I think they are, to preach, as far as they have ability—here is

the simplest case possible, the case in point. The first general preaching of the gospel which the Lord blessed beyond the walls of Jerusalem, was by laymen; or, however, it knew no such distinction. It had not entered into their minds then, that they who knew the glory of Christ were not to speak of it, where and how God enabled them. And the hand of the Lord was with them. Paul preached without any other mission than seeing the glory of the Lord and His word—in a synagogue, too, and boasts of it. And he gives his reasons for Christians preaching elsewhere— "as it is written: I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe and therefore speak." Apollos preached; and when Paul would have sent him from Ephesus to Corinth, he would not go. Yet, so far from being ordained before beginning to preach, he knew only the baptism of John. And Aquila and Priscilla took him to them, and expounded to him the way of God more perfectly. At Rome many of the brethren, waxing bold by Paul's bonds, preached the word without fear. And here I must add, as critics vex themselves about this too, the word is 'heralds.' The same habits of wandering preaching we find in the second and third epistles of John, guarded not by ordination, but by doctrine. Nor is there such a thing mentioned in Scripture as ordaining to preach the gospel. Paul preached before he went out on his work from Antioch. And if they will plead his being set apart there, they are quite welcome; for I reason not against such setting apart, but against the assertion that laymen are incompetent to preach. But the case, if it proves anything for them, proves that laymen can ordain as well as preach, that is all. The only other passage not commonly quoted, but which seems to me nearer the purpose is, "The same commit thou to faithful men, able

to teach others also." But the thing committed here was the doctrine, and proves tradition, if anything, not ordination; for it does not appear that they were ordained for the purpose.

I have now produced ample evidence from Scripture, to a simple mind. I am not attacking ordination, nor anything that may, in the eyes of others, appear valuable, but simply the assertion, that laymen ought not to speak in or preach out of the church; and I say that this assertion is a novelty in Christianity, for that scripture recognises their doing so. I have abstained from diffusive discussions upon what has led to it, or the principles which are involved in it; I put the scriptural fact to anybody's conscience. And I call upon any one to produce any scripture positively, or on principle, forbidding laymen to preach, or requiring episcopal, or other analogous ordination for the purpose.

And here I will advert to what is commonly adduced upon the subject, the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. It is remarkable that those who do so should pass by a case immediately preceding, bearing upon this immediate subject: Eldad and Medad prophesying in the camp, though they had not come up to the door of the tabernacle, because the Spirit rested upon them. "Would God," said the meek man of God, "that all the Lord's people were prophets!" What was here typically proposed—the pouring out the Spirit on all—was, in principle, fulfilled in the Christian dispensation. Then, subsequently, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram acted not under the influence and energy of the Spirit in testifying to the people, but would have assumed authority—the kingship of Moses and the priesthood of Aaron. This was their fault. These things were typical of our

dispensation. So the apostle states. They make universal preaching desirable and the assumption of priesthood a sin. If this be not the force of these passages, let those who object to the explanation explain what is. To the same end is the argument of the apostle applied, the exclusion from the office of priesthood save by such call as Christ had; in which, in one sense, all believers are partakers; in another sense He is alone, unaccompanied into the holy place. In a word, the assumption of preaching by laymen is right. The assumption of priesthood by any, save as all believers are priests, is wrong. This is the dispensation of the outpouring of the Spirit here, qualifying for preaching any here who could do so—in a word, speaking of Jesus (for the distinction between speaking and preaching is quite unsustainable by Scripture, as any one may see, if he take the trouble)—and in which Christ alone exercises the priesthood within the veil in the presence of God for us. This I believe, then, to be the force of these passages. The type of the pouring out of the Spirit in the camp, with the gracious wish of Moses, is the characteristic, the essential distinction, of Christianity.

Accordingly we find its primary presentation to the world, the Spirit poured out on the one hundred and twenty who were assembled together, who thereupon began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance. And Peter, standing up, explains to the Jews, that they were not drunk, but that it was the thing spoken of by Joel, the undistinguished pouring-out of the Spirit upon men of all classes, servants and handmaidens, their sons and their daughters prophesying—the pouring-out of the Spirit upon all flesh. This was the characteristic of its agency, and this we have seen acted upon in the

subsequent history: to deny this is to mistake the only power of the dispensation, and, I will add, to lose it. And what is the consequence? Irregular action goes on, and cannot be restrained, for kingly power cannot be assumed to such purpose, or they are taking the part of Dathan and Abiram; but the power of the Spirit, in which God would give competency to restrain evil, has been slighted; and office which has been relied on affords no remedy, unless the rights which the Roman Catholic system has assumed be attached to it, which is the assumption of power not given to the church at all. It is not for me to assert what is the evil of the present day. I am sure it is not the overflowing boldness of testimony against evil. And if evil teaching exists, the remedy is not in hindering or rejecting lay preaching (for hindered it surely will not be, nor can it be), but the cordial co-operation of those who hold the truth; by which the common energy (and common energy is infinite energy in this matter) should be exercised to sustain it against that which does not hold the truth; and the clergy and all may be persuaded it will be needed. Thus the distinction will be between truth and error, and not office and the Spirit, the most mischievous that human wit could have devised. In the meantime, those who hold office really from God will find those who have the Spirit, but not special office, gladly, aye, thankfully, most thankfully, recognise them in it, instead of being thrown into opposition, and colour given to those who have not the Spirit, in their apparent similarity of conduct; and apparent evidence afforded, that those who have office are opposed to the Spirit, in their prohibition of those who have it exercising it.

The times call for decision; and the only thing which will withstand evil and error, is truth, and truth wielded as a common cause against error and self-will by the saints under the Spirit; and then God can be wholly with them, instead of being obliged to withdraw His countenance from them when they are opposed to their brethren and rejecting them, when He must justify them—when it is the order of His glory, and all their blessing to do so. May He by His Spirit guide us into all truth!

26 I leave the passage as originally published. My thoughts on ordination will be found elsewhere; as well as on appointment to office, which is the subject in this sentence—though I think the distinction of office and place of service by gift was not originally clear in my mind. Gift is in the member of the whole body, and so in the whole body. Office, properly speaking, was local—as elder, deacon.

## On The Formation Of Churches

Editor's Note 27

Aim of this Essay

Circumstances have latterly drawn the attention of many Christians to the question of the competency of believers, in our days, to form organised churches after the model, as they suppose, of the primitive churches, and have led to the inquiry whether the forming of such bodies is at this time agreeable to the will of God. Some respected and beloved brethren insist that the forming and organising of churches is, according to God’s will, the only means of finding blessing in the midst of that confusion which is acknowledged to exist. Others consider that any such attempt is altogether man’s effort, and as such, is wanting in the very primary condition of lasting blessing, namely, the condition of entire dependence upon God; although it may be blessed by God up to a certain point on account of the sincerity of purpose and piety of those who take part in it.

The writer of these pages, bound by the strongest ties of affection and of love in Christ to many who belong to bodies assuming the title of Church of God, has studiously avoided all collusion of judgment with his brethren on this subject, although he has often conversed with them concerning it. He has done no more than withdraw himself from the things he found among them, when those things appeared to him at variance with God’s word, always endeavouring to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” and remembering that word, “If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth” (Jer. 15), a

direction of unspeakable value in the present confusion. His affection is not lessened; his attachment is neither interrupted nor impaired.

Two considerations especially constrain the writer to declare what to him appears the instruction of the Scriptures on this head: duty to the Lord (and the welfare of His Church is the highest of all considerations); and love to brethren—a love which must be guided by faithfulness to the Lord. He writes these pages because the project of making churches is one of the hindrances in the way of the accomplishment of what all desire, namely, the union of the saints in one body: first, because those who have attempted it, having gone beyond the power given them by the Spirit, the flesh has been fostered in them; and, secondly, because those who were wearied with the evil of national systems, thinking themselves under a necessity of choosing between such evil and that which meets their view as dissenting congregations, often remain where they are in despair of anything better. In the actual condition of things it would be an extravagance to affirm that these churches can realise the desired union; but I will not press that lest I should pain some of my readers. I shall rather endeavour to put in the foreground the points on which we are agreed, points which will at the same time assist us to form a right judgment on certain systems standing around us—systems which, if themselves incapable of yielding the good result desired by many brethren, leave the partisans of each, as their only consolation and excuse, the thought that others can do no more than themselves towards realising the object in view.

## The Lord’s Purpose in the Gathering of the Saints on Earth

It is the desire of our hearts, and as we believe God’s will under this dispensation, that all the children of God should be gathered together as such, and, consequently, as not of the world. The Lord hath given Himself “not for that (the Jewish) nation only, but that he should gather together in one the children of God which are scattered abroad.” This gathering together in one was then the immediate object on earth of Christ’s death. The salvation of the elect was as certain before His advent, though accomplished by it, as afterwards. The Jewish dispensation which preceded His coming into the world had for its object, not to gather the church upon earth, but to exhibit the government of God by means of an elect nation. At this time the Lord’s purpose is to gather as well as to save, to realise unity, not merely in the heavens, where the purposes of God shall surely be accomplished, but here upon earth, by one Spirit sent down from heaven. By one Spirit we are all baptised into one body. This is undeniably the truth concerning the church as it is set before us in the word. Men may go about proving that hypocrites and evil men had crept into the church, but there is no resisting the inference that there was a church into which they had crept. The gathering together of all the children of God in one body is plainly according to the mind of God in the word.

## National Systems and their Relation to the Gathering of Believers

As to systems called national, the existence of them cannot be traced higher than the period of the Reformation. The very idea seems not to have found

entrance anterior to that period. The only thing in the least analogous—the privileges of the Gallican Church, and the practice of voting by nations in certain general councils—are so widely different, that they cannot be considered to call for any discussion. Nationalism— in other words, the dividing of the church into bodies—consisting of such and such a nation, is a novelty, not above three centuries old, although many dear children of God are found dwelling in it. The Reformation did not directly touch the question of the true character of God's church. It did nothing directly tending to restore it to its primitive estate. It did what was more important: it brought out the truth of God as to the great doctrine by which souls are saved, with much more clearness, and with far mightier effect than the modern revival. But it did not re-establish the church in its primitive powers. On the contrary, it placed it in general under subjection to the state, in order to free it from subjection to the Pope; because it regarded the papal authority as dangerous, and looked upon all the subjects of a country as Christians.

To escape from this anomaly, believers have sought to shelter themselves under the distinction between a visible and an invisible church. But I read in Scripture, "Ye are the light of the world." Of what use is an invisible light? "A city set on an hill cannot be hid." To say that the true church has been reduced to the condition of being invisible is at once to decide the question, and to affirm that the church has entirely lost its original and essential standing, and departed from the purpose of God, and from the constitution it received from Him; for God did not light a candle that He might put it under a bushel, but that He might put it upon a

candlestick to give light to them that are in the house. If it has become invisible it has ceased to answer the purpose for which it was formed. Such, upon its own shewing, is the present condition of Christianity.

## Position of Dissent Relatively to the Gathering of Believers

We are (may I not say it?) agreed that the gathering together in one all the children of God is according to God's will as expressed in His word. But I ask, before I go farther, Can any one believe that the dissenting congregations, such as we see them in this or any other country, have attained to this end, or are at all likely to attain to it?

This truth of the gathering together of God's children is in Scripture seen realised in various localities, and in each central locality the Christians resident therein composed but one body: Scripture is perfectly clear on that head. It has indeed been objected that such union is impossible, but no evidence is produced from God's word in support of the assertion. It is said, How could it possibly be in London or in Paris? Now the thing was practicable at Jerusalem, where there were more than five thousand believers: and even though meeting in private houses and upper rooms, Christians were nevertheless but one body, under the guidance of one Spirit, with one rule of government, and in one communion, and were so acknowledged. Thus, at Corinth, or elsewhere, a letter addressed to the church of God would have found its way to a known body. I go farther, and say, that it is plainly our duty to desire pastors and teachers to take the care of such

congregations, and that God did raise up such in the church as we see it in the word.

Having fully recognised these weighty truths; namely (1) the union of all the children of God; (2) the union of all the children of God in each locality; having, moreover, acknowledged that they are so seen in the word of God—the question might seem to be settled. But here we pause.

It is indeed undeniable that this state of things, appearing in God's word (for it is a fact9not a theory), has ceased to exist, and the question to be solved is no other than this: How ought the Christian to judge and act when a condition of things set before us in the word no longer exists? You will say, he is to restore it. Your answer is itself one proof of the evil. It supposes that there is power in ourselves. I would say, Listen to the word and obey it, as it applies to such a state of declension. Your answer takes for granted two things: firstly, that it is according to the will of God to re-establish the economy or dispensation on its original footing after it has failed; and secondly, that you are both able and authorised to restore it. Is this scriptural ground to take?

Suppose a case: God made man upright—God gave His law to man. Every Christian will allow that sin is an evil, and that it is our duty not to commit sin. Suppose that one convinced of this truth should set about fulfilling the law and being upright, and in that way pleasing God. You will at once exclaim, he is self-righteous and trusting in his own strength, and does not understand God's word. A return from existing evil unto that which God at the first set up, is therefore not always a proof

that we have understood His word and will. Nevertheless, we shall rightly and truly judge that what He did at the first set up was good, and that we have departed from it.

Apply this to the church. We all acknowledge (for to such only am I writing) that God established churches; we confess that Christians (in a word, the church generally) have sadly departed from this original settlement by God, and are guilty therein. To undertake to re-establish it all on its first footing is (at any rate, it may be) an effect of the working of that very spirit which leads one to seek to set up again his own righteousness when it has been lost.

Before I can accede to your pretensions, I must see, not only that the church was such in the beginning, but, moreover, that it is according to God's will that it be restored to its primitive glory, now that man's sin has tarnished and departed from that glory; and, furthermore, that a voluntary union of "two or three" or two or three and twenty, or several such bodies, are each of them entitled, in any locality, to take the name of the church of God, when that church originally was an assemblage of all believers in any given locality. You must, moreover, make it clear to me, if you assume such a place, that you have so succeeded by the gift and power of God in gathering together believers, that you can rightfully treat those who refuse to answer to your call as schismatics, self-condemned, and strangers to God's church.

And let me here dwell on a most important consideration, which they who are bent on making churches have overlooked. They have had their thoughts

so fully engaged in their churches that they have almost lost sight of the church. According to Scripture the whole sum of the churches here on earth28 compose the church, at least the church on earth; and the church in any given place was no other than the regular association together of whatever formed part of the entire body of the church, that is to say, of the complete body of Christ here on earth; and he who was not a member of the church in the place in which he dwelt, was no member of Christ's church at all; and he who says that I am not a member of God's church at Rolle29 has no right to acknowledge me as being any member of God's church at all. There was no idea of any such distinction between the little churches of God in any given place, and the, church as a whole. Each one was of some church, if one existed where he was, and thus in the church, but no one imagined himself to be in the church if he was separated from the church in the place he lived in. The practice of making churches has alone led to the separation of the two things, and almost obliterated the idea of God's church, by making partial voluntary churches in different places.30 I return to the case of the person already supposed. Let us now suppose that his conscience has been touched and received life through the Spirit of God, what will be the effect? In the first place it will be to make him acknowledge his ruined state in consequence of sin, and the absence of all resource in any innocence or righteousness of his own. The next result will be a feeling of entire dependence on God, and submission of heart to the judgment of God on such a state. Apply this to the church and the whole dispensation. Whilst men slept, the enemy has sown tares. The church is in a state of ruin, immersed and buried in the world—invisible, if

you will have it so; whilst it ought to hold forth, as a candlestick, the hght of God. If the professing body is not in this state of ruin, then I ask our dissenting brethren. Why have you left it? If it be, then confess this ruin—this apostasy—this departure from its primitive standing. Alas! the fact is too evident. Abraham may receive men-servants and maid-servants, oxen, camels, and asses; but his spouse is in the house of Pharaoh.

How, then, will the Spirit work? What will be the acting of such an one's faith? To acknowledge the ruin; to have it present to his conscience, and to be humbled in consequence. And shall we, who are guilty of this state of things, pretend we have only to set about and remedy it? No; the attempt would but prove that we are not humbled thereby. Let us rather search in all humility what God says to us in His word of such a condition of things; and let us not, like foolish children who have broken a precious vase, attempt to join together its broken fragments, and to set it up in hopes to hide the damage from the notice of others.

## In the Fallen Condition of the Present Dispensation, Can Man Restore it?

I press this argument on those who are endeavouring to organise churches. If real churches exist, such persons are not called on to make them. If, as they say, they did exist at the beginning but have ceased to exist, in that case the dispensation is in ruins, and in a condition of entire departure from its original standing. They are undertaking in consequence thereof to set it up again. This attempt is what they have to justify; otherwise the attempt is without anything to warrant it. It will be objected that the church cannot fail, and that God has

given to it a promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I acknowledge it, if we understand by that promise that the salvation of the elect is secure, that the glory of the church in the resurrection will triumph over Satan, and.that God will secure the maintenance of the confession of Jesus in the earth till the church be taken away. That, however, is not the question. The salvation of the elect was equally secured before there was a gathered church. On the other hand, if it is intended to affirm that the present dispensation cannot fail, it is a great and pernicious error so to say: indeed, if such be the truth, why have you separated yourselves from the state in which it was? If the economy or dispensation of God in the gathering of the church on earth still subsists according to its original standing, how is it that you are making new churches? It is a point upon which Popery alone is consistent with itself.

But what says the word? That apostasy is to set in before the judgment; that in the last days perilous times shall come; that there shall be a form of godliness without the power. It adds, “from such turn away.” And the thought that the dispensation of the church cannot fall away is treated of in Romans 11 as a fatal presumption, which leads the Gentile Church to its ruin. The Holy Ghost passes condemnation on those who have that thought, as being wise in their own eyes, and teaches us, on the contrary, that God would act towards the present dispensation as He did towards the previous one; that if it continued in the goodness of God, this goodness would be continued to it, otherwise the dispensation would be cut off. Thus the word reveals the cutting off, and not the restoration of the dispensation,

in case it should not continue faithful. And to go about re-making the church and the churches on the footing on which they stood at first, is to acknowledge the fact of existing failure without submitting ourselves to the witness of God, as to His purposes in reference to such a state of ruin. It is to act according to our own thoughts, and to rely on our own strength, for the accomplishment of our project—and what has been the result?

The question before us is not whether such churches existed at a period when the word of God was written; but whether, after they have, by reason of man's sin, ceased to exist, and believers have been scattered (and these are facts, the truth of which is admitted), those who have undertaken the apostolic office of re-establishing them on their original footing, and in so doing, to set up again the entire dispensation, have really apprehended the divine will, and are indued with power to accomplish the task they have taken upon themselves—questions which are widely distinct. I cannot think that any, even the most zealous of those persons, who, with a desire of which I willingly acknowledge the sincerity, have sought to again set up the fallen dispensation (and David was sincere in his desire to build the temple, although it was not God's will that he should do so), are in a condition to be able to do it, or that they have the right to impose upon my faith, as God's church, the little edifices that they have set up. And yet I am very far from thinking that there have not been churches in time past, when God sent His apostles to settle them; and in my opinion, he who is unable to discern the difference between the state in which the church was in those days and its present condition, has no very clear judgment in the things of God.

## If the Dispensation cannot be Restored, What Remains to be Done?

It will be said that the word and the Spirit still remain in the church: most true. Blessed be God for it: this it is which is the whole ground of my confidence. What the church wants, is to learn to lean upon this. It is on that account that I am enquiring what the word and the Spirit say of the state of the fallen church, instead of arrogating to myself a competency to realise that which the Spirit has spoken of the first condition of the church. What I complain of is, that the thoughts of men have been followed, and that which the Spirit has recorded as having existed in the primitive church has been imitated, instead of searching for what the word and the Spirit have declared concerning our present condition. The same word, the same Spirit, which, speaking by Isaiah, told the inhabitants of Jerusalem to be still, and that God would preserve them from the Assyrian, said, by the mouth of Jeremiah, that he who should go forth to the Chaldeans should be saved alive. Faith and obedience in the one case was nothing less than presumption and disobedience in the other. Some will say this tends to confuse simple minds. Obedience to the word in humility of mind never confuses. I add, that those who are bent on restoring the whole church ought to be well instructed in the word, and to abstain from doing anything under the pretext of simplicity. The lowliness that feels aright the real condition of the church, preserves us from pretensions, that impel to an activity which is unauthorised by the word. The truth is, that the Scriptures, even those already quoted, prove that the condition of the dispensation at its close will be just the reverse of what it was at its opening. And the

text quoted from the Romans (chap. 11:22) is decisive on this point, that God would cut off the dispensation instead of restoring it, if it continued not in the goodness of God.

The passage— “My Spirit remaineth among you—fear ye not,” contains a most sure and precious principle. The presence of the Holy Spirit is the keystone of all our hopes. But this cheering prophecy of Haggai did not lead Nehemiah, who was faithful to God, when Israel returned from the captivity, to set about fulfilling the task assigned to Moses, who was faithful in all his house at the commencement of that dispensation. No, he confesses, in the plainest and most affecting language, the fallen condition of Israel, and that they were “in great distress.” We see him doing all that the word authorised him to do, in the circumstances in which he stood; but never did he set about making an ark of the covenant as Moses had done, and because Moses had made one—nor imitate the Shechinah, which God only could make, nor the Urim and Thummim, nor put in order the genealogies while the Urim and Thummim were wanting. But we are told in the word that he had blessing such as had not been “since the days of Joshua”; because he was faithful to God in the circumstances in which he stood, without assuming to make anew that which Moses had made, and Israel’s sin had destroyed. If he had done that, it would have been an act of human presumption and not of obedience. Obedience, and not the imitation of the apostles, is our duty in such circumstances. It is far more humbling; but, at least, it is more lowly and safe; and that is all I ask or desire, that the church should be more humble. To rest satisfied with existing evils, as if we could do nothing, is

not obedience; but neither is it obedience to imitate the actions of the apostles. The sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit delivers us at the same time from the evil thought of being obliged to continue in that which is evil, and from the pretension to do more than the Holy Spirit is at the same time doing—or from regarding either the one or the other of these states as a state of true order.

I shall be asked—Would you then have our arms hang down, and ourselves to do nothing until we have apostles? By no means. I only doubt whether it be God's will that you should do what the apostles did; and I say that God has left for faithful Christians directions sufficient for the state of things in which the church now is. To follow those directions is more truly to obey, than if we should set about imitating the apostles; and the Spirit of God is ever with us to strengthen us in this way of true obedience.

## Directions Given by the Holy Spirit for the Present Condition of Things

The Spirit of God, foreseeing all that would happen in the church, has, in the word, given warnings, and at the same time, the needful assistance. If He tells us, that in the last days perilous times shall come, and if He pictures to us the men of that time, He adds, "from such turn away." If He says, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14), and this warning is one of all ages; if He says that we are all "one body," and therefore partake of one bread; and, notwithstanding, I find no such union of the saints, He tells me at the same time, that there, where two or three are gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus, He is in their

midst. But His directions are even more precise than this. I have for comfort in all times, that the Lord knows them that are His, but for my own direction, that he that names the name of Christ should depart from iniquity: where I find this established, I must leave it. But there is more; I learn that in a great house, such as the professing church is become, there are vessels to dishonour, and that if a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel made to honour, fit for the master's use. And the man of God is exhorted to follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Those who have been endeavouring to form churches seem, though meaning well, to have entirely forgotten our need of power as well as of direction. When we are told that all the directions for the churches are for all times and places, I venture to ask if they are for times and places in which churches do not exist? and we are brought back to the inquiry—If the dispensation is in ruins, who is to make the churches? Again, I would ask, is the direction given by the apostle, as to the use of the gift of the tongues for our own times? Doubtless, if that gift exists; but that condition is assuredly a most material modification of your rule, and the very turning point of the discussion between us.

## Does the Word of God Authorise the Naming Presidents and Pastors?

Those who cling so fondly to the practice of making and settling of churches, quote the Epistles to Timothy and to Titus, with most undoubting confidence, as serving for guidance to the churches in all ages; whilst they were really never addressed to any church whatever. It

may be observed that the quotations from God's word on matters most bearing on those who are engaged in settling churches, such as the choosing of elders, deacons, etc., must be derived from these epistles alone —and most remarkable it is, that those companions of the apostle who possessed his confidence, were left in the churches, or else sent to them when already existing, in order to select such elders, when the apostle had not done it—a clear proof that the apostle could not confer upon the churches the power of choosing their elders, even when churches he himself had formed were still in existence; and notwithstanding, we hear all this adduced as instructions for the churches in after times. Official nomination is an assumption of apostolic authority, and contrary to the order and principles on which it took place then. Nor has this left the saints without resource when God graciously works. Pastors, and doctors, and evangelists are gifts which have their places in the unity of the body, and have their just exercise wherever God has graciously given them; and in 1 Corinthians 16:15, 16, I find the Holy Ghost directing submission to all who in devoted-ness of heart have given themselves to true labour in the Lord. So 1 Thessalonians 5:12, and Hebrews 13:17, teach the same godly submission to those who labour, and thus take the lead in the work of the Lord.

## The Children of God have Nothing to do but to Meet Together in the Name of the Lord

With what design then am I writing? Is it that Christians should do nothing? No! I have written from a desire that there should be less presumption and more diffidence in what, we undertake to do: and that we should feel more

deeply the ruined condition to which we have reduced the Church.

If you say to me, ‘I have separated myself from the evil that my conscience disapproves, that which is at variance with the word’—it is well. If you urge that God’s word requires the saints to be one and united; that it tells us that, there where two or three are gathered together, Jesus is in the midst of them, and that therefore you “assemble yourselves” together, I say again, it is well. But if you go on to tell me that you have organised a church, or combined together with others to do so; that you have chosen a president or a pastor, and that, having done this, you are now a church, or the Church of God of the place you inhabit—I put this question— My dear friends, who has commissioned you to do all this? Even according to your principle of imitation (although to imitate power is an absurdity: and the kingdom of God is “in power”), where do you find all this in the word £ I see no trace of the churches having elected presidents or pastors. You say that for the sake of order it must be so. My answer is, I cannot get off the ground of the word— “He that gathereth not with me scattereth.” To say that it is necessary that it should be so, is to reason after the manner of men. Your order, being constituted by the will of man, will soon be seen to be disorder in the sight of God. If there are but two or three met together in the name of Jesus, He will be there. If God raises up pastors from amongst you, or sends them among you, it is well; it is a blessing. But ever since the day when the Holy Spirit formed the church, we have no record in the word that the church has chosen them.

What then, it will be asked, must we do? That which faith ever does—acknowledge our weakness and take the place of dependence upon God. God is sufficient in all ages for His church. It is of the last importance that our faith should hold fast the truth, that whatever the ruin of the church on earth, there is ever in Christ all the grace, and faithfulness, and power needed for the circumstances in which the Church is. He never fails. If you are but "two or three," who have faith for it, meet together: you will find that Christ is with you. Call upon Him. He can raise up whatever is needed for the blessing of the saints; and doubt not He will do so. The blessing will not be ensured to us through a pretension on our part to be something when we are nothing. In how many places has not blessing to the saints been hindered by this choosing of presidents and pastors? In how many places might not the saints have assembled together with joy in the strength of that promise made by Christ to the "two or three," if they had not been scared by this pretended necessity for organisation, and by charges of disorder (just as if man was wiser than God), and if their fear of disorder had not persuaded them to continue a state of things which they confess to be wrong? Nor does the constitution of these organised bodies by man hinder the domination of a single individual, or a struggle between several. It tends rather to produce it.

That which the church specially needs is the deep feeling of her ruin and necessity, a feeling which turns for refuge to God—with confession, and keeps clear from all known evil— acknowledges the authority of Christ, as He who rules as Son over His own house, and the Spirit of God as the sole power in the church; and by so doing,

acknowledges every one whom He sends, according to the gift such a one has received, and that with thanksgiving to Him, who by such gift constitutes such brother a servant of all under the authority of the great Head, the great Shepherd of the sheep. To acknowledge the world to be the church, or to pretend to again set up the church, are two things equally condemned and unauthorised by the word.

If you say, what then is to be done? I rejoin—Why are you ever thinking of doing something? To confess the sin which has brought us where we are, to humble ourselves low before the Lord, and, separating from that which we know to be evil, to lean upon Him who is able to do all that is necessary for our blessing, without assuming to do more, ourselves, than the word authorises us to do—such is the position, humble it is true, but proportionately blessed by God.

A point of the utmost importance, which they who wish to organise churches seem to have altogether lost sight of, is that there is such a thing as power, and that the Holy Spirit alone has the power to gather and build up the church. They seem to think that, as soon as they have certain passages of scripture, they have nothing to do but to act them out; but under the garb of faithfulness, there is in this a fatal error—it consists in leaving aside the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. We can only act out the word of God by the power of God. But the constituting the church was a direct effect of the power of the Holy Ghost. To leave aside that power, and still hold to the pretension of imitating the primitive church in what flowed from that power, is strangely to delude ourselves. Only I must remark that, where a direct act of obedience is concerned, the

Christian has not to wait for power: the constant grace of Christ is his power to obey the word. In what precedes, I speak of power to do a divine work in the Church.

I know that those who esteem these little organised associations to be the churches of God, see nothing but mere meetings of men in every other gathering of God's children. There is a very simple answer on this matter. Such brethren have no promise authorising them to set up again the churches of God when they have fallen, whilst there is a positive promise that, where two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus, He is in their midst. Thus there is no promise in favour of the system by which men organise churches, whilst there is a promise for that "assembling together" which so many of the children of God despise.

And what do we see to be the consequence of the pretensions of these bodies? Those who contrast these pretensions with the reality, are disgusted and repelled: while multitudes of them are formed apart from each other, on the various views and opinions of those who formed them; and thus the desired object is hindered, namely, the union of God's children. Here and there the pastor's gifts may produce much effect; or it may happen that all who are Christians may be living in unity, and there will be much joy; but the same thing would have resulted though there should have been no pretension whatever to be the church of God.

## Conclusions

I conclude by a few propositions:—

1. The object to be desired is the gathering of all God's children.

2. The power of the Holy Ghost can alone effect this.

3. Any number of believers have no need to wait till that power produces the union of all (provided they act in the spirit of unity, which, if carried out, would unite the whole body o Christ), because they have the promise that, where two or three are gathered together in the name of the Lord, He will be in the midst of them, and two or three may act in reliance upon this promise.

4. The necessity of ordination for the administration of the Supper nowhere appears in the New Testament, and it is clear that it was to break bread that Christians came together on the Lord's Day; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20, 23.

5. A commission from man to preach the gospel is a thing unknown in the New Testament.

6. The choosing of presidents or pastors by the church is also altogether without warrant in the New Testament. The election of a president is a mere act of man, entirely unauthorised. It is a mere intervention of our wilfulness in the concerns of God's church, an action pregnant with evil consequences. The choosing of pastors is an encroachment on the authority of the Holy Ghost, who distributes gifts according to His will. Alas! for him who does not profit by the gift which God grants to another. Where elders were appointed, it was either by the apostles or else by those sent by the apostles to the churches. If the church is in ruins, God is sufficient even for that state of ruin; God will lead on and guide His children, if they walk in humility and obedience, without setting about a work that God has not called them to.

7. It is clearly the duty of a believer to separate himself from every act that he sees to be not according to the word, though bearing with him who ignorantly does the act; and his duty requires this of him, even though his faithfulness should cause him to stand alone, and though, like Abraham, he should be obliged to go out without knowing whither he goes.

## Final Remarks

My design in these few pages has not been to shew either the ruined condition of the church, nor yet that the actual dispensation cannot be again set up, but rather to propose a question which is usually entirely misapprehended by those who undertake to organise churches. The ruin of the dispensation has been briefly considered in a tract on the apostasy of the present dispensation; but as a brother, to whom these pages have been read over, felt that this question of the ruin of the dispensation was awakened in his mind and desired to have some proof to satisfy such as were in like manner exercised, I add a few sentences.

1. The parable of the tares of the field is the Lord's judgment on this point—that the evil wrought by Satan in the field where the good seed had been sown should not be remedied, but should continue until the harvest. Let it be borne in mind that the parable has nothing to do with discipline among God's children, but relates to the question of a remedy for evil brought in by Satan into the dispensation itself "whilst men slept," and to the restoration of the dispensation on its primitive footing. This question is decided summarily and with authority by the Lord in the negative, for He tells us that, throughout the duration of the dispensation, no remedy

shall be applied to the evil; that the time of harvest, in other words the judgment, should extirpate it, and that until that period the evil should go on. Let us here call to mind that our separation from the evil, and our enjoyment of the presence of Christ with the “two or three,” is altogether a different thing from the pretension to set up the dispensation again, now that the evil has come in. The former is at once a duty and a privilege; the latter is the fruit of pride and disregard of the directions of the word.

2. The nth chapter of Romans, already quoted, expressly tells us that the present dispensation shall be dealt with like that which went before it, and that, if it continued not in the goodness of God, it should be cut off—not restored.

3. The second chapter of the second Epistle to the Thessalonians teaches us that the “mystery of iniquity” was already working; that, when an obstacle which then existed should be taken out of the way, that “wicked one” should be revealed; and that the Lord would “consume” him with “the breath of his mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of his coming.” Thus the evil which had come in, in the days of the apostles, was to continue and ripen, and manifest itself, and be consumed by the Lord’s coming.

The third chapter of the second Epistle to Timothy shews the same thing, that is to say, the ruin of the dispensation, and not its restoration: that in the last days “perilous times should come,” that men should be “lovers of their own selves” (and the Spirit adds, “from such turn away”), and that “evil men and seducers”

should “wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

Jude also shews that the evil which had already crept into the church would be the subject of judgment at the Lord’s coming. (Compare verses 4 and 14). And this awful truth is confirmed by the analogy of all the ways of God toward men: namely, that man has perverted and corrupted what God has given him for his blessing: and that God has never repaired the evil, but has brought forth something better, after judging the iniquity. And this better thing has been in its turn corrupted, until at last eternal blessing will be brought in. When the dispensation was a positive revelation, as was the case under the law, God gathered a feeble remnant of believers from among those who were unbelieving, and translated them into that new blessing which He has established in place of that which had been corrupt, transplanting the residue of the Jews into the church. In the passage of Romans 11 the Holy Spirit instructs us that the Lord will in like manner deal with the present dispensation.

The same thing is seen in the Apocalypse. As soon as the “things that are” (that is, the seven churches) are brought to a close, the prophet is carried to heaven, and all that follows has to do, not with anything acknowledged as a church, but with God’s providence in the world.

I have done no more than cite a few express passages; but the more we study God’s word, the more do we find this solemn truth confirmed. I say, then, do whatever you are enabled to do; but do not pretend to accomplish objects which are altogether beyond what the Lord has

given you to do; and do not thus betray the pretensions and the weakness of the flesh. Humility of heart and soul is the sure way not to be found fighting against the truth, for God giveth grace to the humble. And may His name of grace and mercy be for ever praised.

27 Published originally in French, in Switzerland, about 1840. In English it has been entitled, “Reflections on the Ruined Condition of the Church; and on the Efforts making by Churchmen and Dissenters to Restore it to its Primitive Order.”

28 Or, rather, the Christians of whom they consist.

29 The principal champion of the dissenting churches, an excellent man, was there.

30 Lardonism and some bodies of analogous character alone maintain a consistent course in this respect, and are consequently completely in error. By a happy inconsequence in those who are now forming little churches of God in different places, they nevertheless consider believers who do not form part of them as being in the fullest sense of God’s church.

# Some Further Developments

Of The Principles Set Forth In The Pamphlet,

Entitled “On The Formation Of Churches”

and reply to some objections made to those principles31

## Introduction

The edition of the little tract “On the Formation of Churches” being at present exhausted, instead of publishing a second I give some explanations, called for alike by the circumstances actually surrounding the question and the difficulties which present themselves to many minds. My intention is not controversy. I am aware that, instead of doing good, it only tends to create divisions. I do not think I enter into it by giving these few explanations followed by several remarks on certain passages of the word. As to that which concerns me personally, I have only to be silent; for me it is a small thing to be judged by man’s judgment, I desire to be like a deaf man who heareth not; Psa. 38:13, 14. A stranger, it is true, according to the flesh, here as elsewhere, I have learnt that the Holy Spirit forms sweet and strong bonds, such as the world cannot understand, between those who, but for that, would never have known each other. I have also learnt that the children of God know what it is to be strangers (Exod. 23:9; Lev. 19:34), in that God has made them themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth. The ties uniting them are not of this world, and will remain when all that distinguished them here below will have ceased to exist.

I do not propose to myself to reply to Mr. Rochat's pamphlet. My only wish is to take advantage of the chief points of this work in order to treat of the important subject now occupying people's minds. It may be thought perhaps that, if I do not reply, it is because I am unable. Be it so. I would rather be reckoned beaten, than go out of the path in which I believe the Spirit of God leads me, or deviate, by uncharitable conduct, from that which may be profitable to all the souls loved of Jesus. I should not even have published this little work, if some persons had not sought explanations from me on passages quoted on either side.

I shall be allowed to make some remarks by the way. If the name of Rolle has given pain to the well-beloved brother who has undertaken the task of replying to me, I truly regret it. I might have chosen as an example any other local body; and if the name of Rolle presented itself to my mind, it is probably because the meeting in that town has been formed, as everyone knows, on the principles under discussion. However, I think I also now see in it the hand of God.

It may perhaps be said to me, If desirous of avoiding controversy, why do you enter upon such a subject? I reply that, along with a sincere desire for peace, it is not right on that account to refrain from setting forth important principles. If we are content to be judged by men, and commit ourselves entirely to God, I believe controversy can always be avoided. Those who wish to know the truth will examine the word and will be enlightened on the subject in question.

It strikes me that our beloved brother Rochat would have done better to have brought more calmness into

the discussion. The little tract, according to him, presents ‘views really quite new,’ ‘on a point of singular importance.’ Now, since the importance of the subject is so generally recognised, I may at least be excused having spoken of it. If charity is carefully maintained, I hope in the end what I have done will be proved to be right, and I believe that God Himself will approve me in it. Although the brother who has replied to me blames me, I continue to respect and love him. I look upon him, if not as my elder in age according to the flesh, at least as my elder in the grace of Christ. I love him, notwithstanding that he differs from me; I love him because of the grace God has bestowed upon him, and because I believe him to be much more faithful than I am in many respects. Blessed be God there is that in the effects of grace which is stronger sometimes than the rather rough usage of man’s mind. I hope not to be wanting in love whilst making a few remarks on my brother’s work, which will soon bring me to the main point of the question.

## General Remarks

The pamphlet which I have in view strikes me rather as the writing of one who, unaccustomed to argue with equals, looks for the reception of what he says as a thing decided. I beg this dear brother will bear with me whilst I explain a few things to him and examine with him his interpretations of the word. It seems to me that he has misunderstood me in many respects, and that he has not rightly interpreted some passages. A considerable portion of his pamphlet is taken up in replies to matters which are in his own thoughts, and not in the little tract; to matters he may have heard of somewhere, but for

which I am by no means responsible. He blames the expression ‘apostolic churches’; I have looked for it in vain in the tract. He argues at great length against the idea that there are no apostles because of the sins of the church; I have never said a word, nor have I even thought, of the question. One more little remark: he blames me much for using unscriptural expressions, and tells me that a person who thinks with the Bible can speak with the Bible. I have employed as well as I could words and expressions, which presented themselves to my mind; whether the thoughts are scriptural remains the question. Our dear brother does not like this expression ‘the church dispensation,’ in fact it does not appear to me very exact, but it is sufficient that everyone understands me. The substance of the question is what is important in my mind. But is it not surprising that, in the very pages where these expressions are so strongly blamed, we should find the following words, ‘The question is quite a different one. The dispensation of the new covenant subsists’ (page 31 of the reply of Mr. Rochat)? Where is the expression found in the word? Does not our brother think with the Bible in this.32 I am not quite satisfied with my expression; his is perhaps more in accordance with traditional thoughts. In that it has the advantage, and will be more easily adopted: but in what is it more scriptural? For my part I do not blame our brother that, in order to express his thoughts, he has chosen words which he found the best adapted for the object he had in view. Let him on his part also forgive my expressions. On a point of such great importance for all the church, such observations may be well passed over.

There is one more thing which seems to have offended our brother. It is the desire so often expressed in the tract for greater humility. I have spoken of the tendency of the system to engender pride, but I have never spoken of individual pride. The pamphlet furnishes me with a very clear example of the evil I desired to specify. 'If the church,' says the author (page 107), 'wishes its decisions to be respected, it should make them so as to be able to say, founding itself with full conviction of the word: It has seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.' Now that is what I call pride. We must bear in mind that the church, according to our brother, is this or that particular flock. Let us now examine the passage quoted. A dispute had arisen at Antioch, on a matter of importance, one that interested all the churches of the Gentiles. That was the appeal of a church to a higher authority or light. The authority of Paul and Barnabas having failed to decide it, a resolution was come to that they and other brethren should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, for the decision of this matter. Then the apostles and elders came together to examine this question, and having associated all the brethren with them, they thus addressed the brethren from among the Gentiles: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things." Later, Paul and his fellow travellers, passing through the cities, instructed them to keep the ordinances decreed by the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. To arrogate to oneself the right of speaking as the apostles and elders spoke, when they were judging a question proposed to them and which referred to all the churches of the Gentiles and to say, It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, appears to me pride, when spoken by a meeting in our times,

come out of existing worldly systems. That is what I mean when I speak of pride; the above example is clear enough and sufficiently precise to elucidate my meaning.

Our brother insists much on this; viz., that as long as faithful persons remain, it would be wrong to say that the church has apostatised. He rests his argument upon this precept— “From such turn away,” and he quotes Revelation 13 to shew us that there are faithful ones even under the Antichrist himself, connecting this quotation with 2 Thessalonians 2. I agree with him as to the connection between these texts, but it is precisely that which proves that the existence of faithful persons does not prevent there being an apostasy; for in this last passage that state of things is called apostasy although faithful persons remain, seeing that there will be such till the end. The existence then of faithful persons does not prevent there being an apostasy, since there will be some even under the Antichrist. The presence of Elias, of the prophets hid by fifties in caves, of the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, did not do away with the fact of the ruin of Israel then in a state of apostasy, worshipping that false God. Israel apostatised in making the golden calf; but this did not prevent Moses remaining faithful, nor the Levites consecrating themselves to God by their fidelity. There have been faithful persons in all apostasies, and there will be till the end.

But our brother, having neither understood nor laid hold of the assertions of the tract, argues against things not found therein. I will explain myself on these points.

He insists upon it that the dispensation has not been cut off.33 Neither do I believe that it has. Like him, I distinguish between the abolition of a state of things by the Lord ‘ and the case where this state of things has ceased to exist through the negligence or the wickedness of man.’ What I have proposed for the examination of brethren is this, what is the will of God in this latter case? In thus putting the question, I can say I have gained my aim, for I am fully convinced that the Holy Ghost will enlighten the saints. I ought also to say that I do not even think that the apostasy is at its height. Some there are who apply 2 Thessalonians 2 to the Roman system; these latter cannot deny that the apostasy is already come.

The chief point on which I insist is that the word of God predicts an apostasy and a cutting off, and tells us that, if the Gentiles do not continue in the goodness of God, they will be cut off. Now if the state of things established by God has ceased to exist through the negligence or wickedness of men, it is clear they have not continued in the goodness of God. One more explanation. Provided that the meaning of the term “church” is understood, I have no objection to the word. The word church means an assembly: there, where two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus, it is clear that there is an assembly. But when, by dint of the use of the term church, the belief is entertained that expressions made use of by the apostles and the church at Jerusalem can be employed, then I am afraid; especially when they assume the name of the ‘church of God of such a place,’ an expression which goes much farther than that of church. It is true, that if some are unwilling to meet, that does not prevent its being the church of God; but

the result is that they are not of the church of God. After that to affirm that the few who did not dare meet with the disciples at Jerusalem were nevertheless disciples, amounts to saying that he who refuses to confess the Lord openly with his mouth is notwithstanding that a Christian, and should not the less be recognised as such. Not so; if a body is the assembly of God, he who does not wish to be of it cannot expect to be recognised as a Christian; and if he separates himself from it, he ought to be looked upon as a schismatic.

Is it possible that one who refused to meet with the disciples at Jerusalem, and to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, would have been recognised as a Christian? would not any one who separated himself from them have been treated as schismatic and even worse? Save in the case of a schismatic or of an excommunicated person, there is no example of a church of God of a place which was not understood to contain all the children of God in that place.

I thank God that His word connects with an assembly of two or three disciples gathered in the name of Jesus all that is requisite for its walk before the Lord. One more little remark. They tell us, Let us walk in the ordinances of the word: there is no need of apostles since we have their written instructions, which can at all times be carried out. Be it so. Well then are there so many flocks habitually deprived of partaking of the Lord’s supper through the want of consecrated pastors? It is not I who prevent them. I believe that, if all things are done with propriety and good order, there can be breaking of bread quite as well without a consecrated man as with one. I see in the word no trace of consecration for this purpose. I cite this fact to shew that the want is felt of

something more than precepts to follow: in other words, that God should raise up by His power instruments according to His good pleasure. Thus it is not enough to say, Here are the precepts: all that is now to be done is to follow them; since there are directions incapable of being followed out, unless God interposes afresh to re-establish what is lost as regards instruments. Let no one mistake me: I love order with all my heart, the true order which befits the house and ordinances of God. Leaving aside circumstances, every brother has the same capacity to break the bread. Nature as well as the word teaches us that young men, that new converts, are little fitted to take the lead in anyway, and that the elders, if God has raised up any, have their proper place in the house of God. I here repeat, with all my heart, what I said in the little tract: that is, that with earnest and continual supplication I do pray that God may raise up pastors and teachers according to His own heart, for the wants of His dear sheep, in order that the church of God may be preserved, cared for, instructed, rendered capable of resisting the snares of Satan, and that the little ones of the flock may be sheltered from every wind of evil doctrine. Yes, this is the fondest desire of my heart. It cannot be otherwise for one who loves the church and knows something of the love of Jesus for them who are His, of the privileges which belong to them, and who knows also something of the snares and devices of the enemy. Moreover, I think that the relation of a pastor to the sheep of God’s flock is the sweetest and most precious which exists on earth. In its fruits and its joys, this relation will not terminate here. I may add that I know no person, at least so it seems to me, who desires more faithfully to fill it than he whose pamphlet has given rise to these pages.

As to the rest, Ephesians 4 suffices for our guidance in this matter.

## Of the Unity of the Body of Christ

We are now coming to points of much greater gravity than mere explanations.

If what I have said is called controversy, I reply that an explanation from me has been insisted upon, in order that the author himself of the pamphlet might understand me; I believe I have nearly limited myself to this. Before proceeding to a few remarks on the passages quoted, there is one point of the greatest importance questioned in our brother's pamphlet. I had said that, being taken up with the thought of the churches, the idea of the church was too much forgotten. What was my surprise to see formally denied the unity of the church on earth, as if that was not in the thought of God. The author attributes to me the idea of a confederation of churches: because the churches are always the starting point of his thoughts. For my part, it is not a confederation of churches that I see in the word, but the unity of the body of Christ. Our brother, in quoting from Timothy, pretends that when the word speaks of the church, it is, as if it were said in French, "the family," to designate the families or each family (see pp. 26, 27, first reflection). I think the word of God speaks very clearly of one body on the earth, having certain gifts and privileges, as also a certain responsibility, and a common destiny here below although belonging to heaven in the counsels of God. I shall quote a few passages, by which it will be seen that the point in question is of one body, and of one body on the earth endowed with certain privileges, for the

employment of which on the earth it is also responsible, although the result, which is the perfection of the body, be in heaven according to the counsels of God. So this subject can be considered under the point of view either of this responsibility here below, or that of the accomplishment of the counsels of God in the heavens.

These are the quotations from holy scripture: “And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body,” Eph. 2:16. “Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord “(v. 20).” There is one body and one Spirit,” Eph. 4:4. “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love,” Eph. 4:16. Gifts are given, not for the edification of one church, but for the “edification of the body of Christ” (v. 12). They are placed not in one church, but in the church. The result of this principle is of all importance, because, if I am a teacher, I am not one of a certain church, but in the church. But perhaps it may be said, this body has its unity in the heavens. I reply, that the apostle speaks of the service of the members of the body here below, of the joints of service here below, of which the work will be finished when the church will be glorified. Moreover, the application of this quotation to the church, a society here below, is in accordance with the views of the author himself of the pamphlet (p. 43); and we can convince ourselves of this application in reading attentively the passages quoted by him. The church is then one body here below, and the gifts sent from on high are gifts placed like joints in the whole body. All the epistle to the

Ephesians might be cited here; for this fundamental and precious truth forms the subject from beginning to end.

The same truth is found again in 1 Corinthians 12. There is but one and the same Spirit. “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will” (v. 11). “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body; so also is Christ” (p. 12). It is not then a confederation of churches, but one body; and here we have the divine constitution of the body of Christ, which is the church. It never could have been said of one church in particular, “so also is Christ,” because no church in particular is the body of Christ: “Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church; first, apostles,”34 etc. The same truth is found in Colossians 2:19, and Romans 12:4-6. I fully admit then the existence of churches in the intention of God; but I say, that the ruling thought of the apostle:, or rather of the Spirit of God, in this matter, is the body of Christ, the church, and not the churches; and, although the gifts can be exercised here and there generally, but not of necessity in one assembly, in the beginning they were not considered as the portion of one church, but as that of the church, of the body of Christ.

Also Christians are not members of a church, but of the church: namely, the body of Christ. God has set the members every one of them in the body; the members are only one body (1 Cor. 12:12). The destiny of this body, looked upon in its unity of internal life here below, is one; and looked at in its responsibility here below, its destiny as a dispensation is also one. I do not deny that churches may fall and be subsequently restored35

through repentance; but the admission of this truth does not exclude the other. To ignore, forget, and still more, to deny this unity, is to deprive oneself of the chief element of the doctrine of the word on the subject we have now in hand. This leads Christians to occupy themselves with matters relating to the confederations of men, rather than the recognition of the rights of the Spirit of God in the body of Christ. This is why I say that I do not speak of the confederations of the churches, but of the unity of the church, of the body of Christ; and I assert that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are found in this body acting by its members.

This truth, of the unity of the church as a body here below, a truth misapprehended and disfigured, it is true, in the way of presenting it as a confederation of churches is, says the author of the pamphlet, a fundamental error into which I have fallen, and which falsifies all my reasoning (p. 26). This expression, the church, signifies the churches or each church (pp. 27, 28). The word in looking at the church as a society only sees churches and not the church.

It is necessary here to be clear and precise. I affirm that the doctrine of the unity of the body of Christ, is a fundamental truth of the word of God. I appeal to Ephesians 4, Colossians 2, 1 Corinthians 14, and Romans 12; and exhort all my brethren to search thoroughly these passages. Further, I affirm that all the privileges of the church flow out from this principle36—that the gifts are in the church, that the faithful are the members of the church, of the body of Christ, and not of one church. It is plain that wherever this principle is ignored or denied, all judgment on the state of the church must be proportionately erroneous. The apostles

were in the church, and not in a church. Apollos was as much a teacher at Corinth as at Ephesus, because the church was but one. The daughters of Philip performed the duties entrusted to them in the house of their father; they made use of the gift they had received as members of the church, of the body of Christ, even when in an assembly they must have held their peace.

## On the Nomination of Pastors

Before treating the subject of the ruin of the actual economy, we shall speak a little of the nomination of pastors. Our brother does not wish to insist on the passage of the Acts, the only one which speaks of elders being ordained and which could be alleged according to the ordinary translation which renders it, by the opinion (avis) of the assemblies.37 I have no doubt this was done in the unity of the Spirit with all the body, but by this expression, “they had ordained them elders,” it is evident that the word they refers here to Paul and Barnabas. If I said in an assembly, I select for you such and such a person to be an elder, could it be said that the assembly had made the choice? The introduction of the words “by the opinion of the assemblies “is purely gratuitous. Our brother says that it is through prejudice that the words have been withdrawn. Take Acts 10:41, where the same word is met with in the original, and let us give it the meaning which it is desired to put upon it in Acts 14:23, and the absurdity will appear: “Not to all the people, but unto witnesses38 chosen before of God by the suffrages of the assemblies,” “or by way of suffrage.” Although in the word used here there is an allusion to the custom of raising the hand in voting, it is employed simply to signify the choice, or rather the

designation, of some person. The translation “by the suffrage of the assemblies,” is quite false, for if it be insisted on that the Greek word means to vote by raising the hand, then according to that translation, they voted by the opinion of the assemblies; but it is impossible to attribute, by mean’s of this same word, the choice to the apostles and the opinion to the assembly. If it were a case of vote, the assembly should have raised their hands and thus have made their choice. This expression, to choose by the opinion (avis) of the assemblies, I repeat it, is false in every case. The word is made to carry the sense of choosing by the advice of some other. Persons who raise their hands choose; the word cannot thus be cut in two.

The fact is, that it is simply stated that the apostles chose them elders in every assembly. But our brother says, One can appoint when others have made the selection. That is true; but the question is to know if the others have chosen. I reply, that there is no trace in God’s word of election of pastors; we have only the single case of the choice of elders; and, moreover, this selection was made by apostles or their delegates. Titus had been sent as a delegate of the apostle to fill his place in certain respects: and so the means employed for the appointment of elders ever remains outside a church. There may be many pastors in a flock, provided that God has raised them up and given them, without any selection of man; because pastors are a gift from on high; and if this be so, to establish pastors is not the act of the Church.39 Besides, I see no voting by the church in any case sanctioned by the Spirit or the word. We are taught in the word (Eph. 4) that pastors are gifts from on high which Christ distributes. We see in the history of

the apostles that they chose elders for the churches, Acts 14. We find also that the apostle sent Titus, to ordain them in every city, following the orders he had given him—the requisite qualities for a bishop or overseer not being described in any epistle addressed to a church, but only in a letter addressed to an individual, who, in this matter, represented the apostle. We have not a single example of the choice of a bishop or of an elder made by a church, nor of a vote on any subject whatever. The question for our decision is, what does the word authorise us to do in this case? The author of the pamphlet admits (p. 70), that the word of God does not speak of the choice of the church. This is already a concession which says much: but he adds, that analogy is in favour of this practice; we have the case of Matthias and the deacons.

As to Matthias, not only was he named before the descent of the Holy Ghost, but it was done on an entirely different principle from that of the church's choice, viz., on the Judaic principle, which consisted in drawing by lot. As to the deacons, or at least as to the seven who were chosen to serve tables, the analogy is contrary to that which our brother wished to shew. The apostles, having received a gift from above, a ministry of God (a ministry of which it is said, "ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you," John 15:16), did not wish to mix themselves up with a temporal ministry. And the choice was given to the church for the service of tables, because the church furnished the tables; just as the choice was reserved to God when God furnished the gift. It was on this account that Paul, in order that the ministry of the word confided to him by God should not be suspected, refused to take the money which the

churches desired to entrust to him, unless someone chosen by the churches accompanied him to take charge together with him. Thus, if the passages quoted are examined, it will be found that the analogy is quite contrary to the conclusion sought to be drawn, and one that upholds the principle I have shewn. But in the pamphlet itself I. find a full confession of the true state of the matter.

There are the views of the author on this point. Whilst giving his assent to a passage of the tract which advises not to go beyond gifts, he says (p. 106), ‘the Head of the church will be well able in His good time to send teachers, elders, deacons, without its being necessary for us to make them before he sends them.’ That is my thought: I believe it is the thought of God on the subject; but I stop there, wishing to walk humbly, praying earnestly to God for the raising up such men for the wants of the church. I bless God also for gifts, perhaps inferior, but useful, which He deigns to bestow in the meantime, and I act upon the universal principles of the word, which are applicable to such a state of things. See 1 Peter 5:5; 1 Corinthians 16:10-12, 14-16,18; Philippians 2:20, 30; and other passages.

It is no doubt a state of weakness, but if in this state God is waited on, and if He is honoured, “to him that hath, shall be given”; He will honour our endeavour. But this is how our brother continues, ‘In the meantime, let us choose, for the sake of order and decency, governing men to carry on the work, who, according to the gift that is in them, may fill up every day, as well as they can, offices which are not yet manifested.’ It is then acknowledged that, pending God’s action, man’s intervention to fill up offices not yet manifested is

necessary. That is the knot of the question. Where is such a thing to be found in the word? Where the trace of such a principle, of such an idea? The result is, that if any true gift of ministry, or eldership, is manifested, the organisation being already complete, it follows, that the provisionary substitute must be deposed from his presidentship—an operation calculated to produce the most painful results that could happen to a body of Christians. Such an act would look like ingratitude and selfwill; by many it would be termed revolutionary, and might nourish in the body habits and dispositions most hurtful to true sanctification. This is what will take place necessarily if one will act previous to God's action. Should not these consequences be arrived at, then the true elder will remain outside his office, and the faithful will in consequence suffer a proportionate loss. The fact is, that the most ordinary effect of this proceeding is the almost entire prevention of the development of real gifts.40

## Of the Ruin of the Present Dispensation

After having given these explanations, I return to the subject of the ruin of the present dispensation, that is, of the system established of God here below—to that which the word of God says concerning the destiny of this dispensation. I wish to speak with all possible respect; but it seems to me that our brother has quite failed to understand what the Bible says on this subject. This is not the place for questions with regard to churches, but of the intentions or the warnings of God, concerning that which was established on earth, after the death and exaltation of our Lord Jesus. I do not hold to the word dispensation, although it is generally used to specify a

certain state of things, established by the authority of God, during a given period. The author of the pamphlet himself gives it this sense when he speaks (p. 49) of the Levitical dispensation, the present dispensation, the dispensation of the fulness of time, and so on. What we have now to do, is to try and become acquainted with what concerns the present dispensation.

The greater part of the difficulty, which in general presents itself to the minds of the faithful on this subject, consists in their confounding the intentions of God with regard to the dispensation with His counsels regarding the faithful found in it. These counsels can never fail in their effect, but the dispensation itself may pass away and come to an end (although having been to the glory of God, in that it has displayed His ways), because the unfaithfulness of man has rendered it unfit to be the means of manifesting any longer this glory. Then God, who foreknows all that He purposes to accomplish, substitutes for it another dispensation in which man is placed in another kind of trial, and thus all the ways of God are manifested, and His manifold wisdom shines in its true brightness even in the heavenlies. We know that the Levitical dispensation has passed away, and that the faithful found there have been saved according to the counsels of God. Let us again examine, with more development, what the word of God says of the present dispensation. First, there is a very solemn question, which is closely connected with the destiny of the dispensation. Is this dispensation the last? This is evidently a question of the highest importance. The author of the pamphlet says that, after all, it is always the same dispensation of the fulness of times which subsists; that it is always Jews and Gentiles

forming one body in Christ by faith, and being the people of God under the new covenant. This dispensation of the fulness of times, says he, is sufficiently explained in Galatians 4:4, “But when the fulness of the time was come,” etc., and the gathering together of all things in Christ as under one head is, says he, sufficiently explained in Ephesians 2 by the gathering together of the Jews and Gentiles in one body in Christ. If in my turn I dare complain of expressions, I should say that I do not like to hear it said that one passage is sufficiently explained by another. I desire rather to seek what God has meant to say in each passage.

May I be allowed to make a remark here? I can hardly suppose that the author of the pamphlet ignores all that has been written on the subject of the coming of the Saviour to introduce a new dispensation. A large number of Christians of all denominations, and even of his brethren in the ministry, whether national or dissenters, believe fully, as a truth of the Christian faith, that there will be another dispensation before the end of the world. I doubt indeed, if amongst dissenting brethren whose ministry is a little known41 there be one who does not believe in this truth. I do not quote them as authorities; but I am a little surprised that the author satisfies himself with saying that Galatians 4:4 sufficiently explains Ephesians 1:10.

Let us examine a little this question by the word. First, although in many translations the resemblance between the fulness of times of Ephesians 1:10 and the fulness of time of Galatians 4:4 may strike people, nevertheless this resemblance does not exist in the Greek.42 The passage of the Epistle to the Galatians only means that

the period had arrived, that the time that had to run was accomplished, or, if you will, that the time purposed and ordained in the wisdom of God was fully come. Martin translated “accomplishment of the time,” which appears to me pretty exact. But in Ephesians 1:10 it is the dispensation of the fulness or of the accomplishment of the times, the dispensation which is characterised as the accomplishment of all the arrangements of God.

Now, it is not at all a dispensation which is in question, when it is said that a certain term is come, that a certain fact is accomplished; although that fact may be the foundation of the present dispensation. So far is it from being a description of that dispensation that the greater part of the description turns upon that which has preceded the dispensation, upon that which was to happen before the dispensation existed? Christ born under the law is not at all this dispensation, although His birth necessarily preceded it. Neither is it a question, in this passage of Galatians, of the gathering of Jews and Gentiles in one body, but of the relation of the redeemed with God. And if the union of Jews and Gentiles explains sufficiently the union of all things in Christ, I ask, which of the Jews or Gentiles represent the things which are in heaven? (Eph. 1:10). Besides, the Jews will be restored and blessed as a nation in the dispensation to come, which is quite another thing from their union with the Gentiles in one body. Here we are on a fundamental point, upon which the whole question hangs. I feel I ought to point out this distinctly. Our brother says, that the present dispensation is the dispensation of the fulness of times, that Galatians 4:4 refers to this also, and that it is always this dispensation of the fulness of times which subsists, although under

different phases; in short, that on the return of the Jews this dispensation will subsist, as well as the dispensation of the gathering of Jews and Gentiles (pp. 29-49). This is evidently a capital point; because, if there be another dispensation, this one must necessarily terminate, instead of subsisting to the end.

For my part, I say, there is no connection between Ephesians 1:10 and Galatians 4:4; I say, that the author has confounded the birth and the first coming of Christ (Gal. 4:4) with the dispensation of the fulness of times; that this dispensation of the fulness of times does not yet exist, and that the present dispensation must terminate so as to give place to another. I doubt his finding amongst his brethren any man, well instructed in the word, who would agree with him in his assertions; and yet all his system depends upon their being well grounded. I ask every brother, capable of forming a judgment, if the explanation that our brother has given of Ephesians I:10, and of Galatians 4:4, is right. Do they find also that the application of the expression “the dispensation of the fulness of times” to the present dispensation is correct? Let us pay great attention to the scope of this question. God has been pleased to reveal to the church the mystery of a future dispensation; the system of the author of the pamphlet hides the mystery and plunges the church back again into ignorance in this respect. It has not been God’s will that the Christians from among the Gentiles should be ignorant that Israel was rejected, as a nation, but only during the period of the coming in of the fulness of the Gentiles. The author makes this mystery once more unknown, and would have the Jews, as a national body, take their place in the fulness of the Gentiles.

The supremacy of Christ over all things is found set forth in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians as distinct from His supremacy in the church. The one pertains to His rights of Creator although He enjoys them as man; the other to the power of His resurrection, according to which He is head of the body (see, for the first, Col. 1:15, 16, and for the second, verse 18). So little is it true that these words, the church and all things, are identical terms, that, in the passage (Eph. 1:10), the gathering together of all things is a mystery revealed to the church, and that, at the end of the chapter, we have Christ, Head of His body, the church, over all things.

I do not say what the pamphlet makes me say, 'that the dispensation of the fulness of times has failed'; for I deny entirely that that dispensation has come. I add, that salvation through the blood of Christ existed before this dispensation, and, in like manner, as there will be faithful ones under the Antichrist, it is evident that access to the throne of grace will yet be open; but that does not prevent the fact, that this dispensation is in a state of ruin, that the apostasy exists, because the word of God affirms that the presence of the Antichrist will be the signal that the apostasy has already arrived.43 I repeat what I said in my pamphlet, viz., that the gathering together in one body of the children of God (not as the author of the reply has made me say, the gathering together of the churches) was the immediate object of the death of Christ as regards this dispensation, because John says so in his gospel, John 11:52. The passage (Eph. 2:17, 18) quoted by the author of the reply to shew the contrary, proves what I say, if it be examined from verse 16 to the end; and chapter

3:4-6. The subject which the apostle treats in the whole passage, is not only salvation in Christ, or the access of a Christian to the throne of grace, but the unity of the body. It would be impossible here to enter into the things which prove that a new dispensation will take place on the coming of the Saviour. That has been treated elsewhere.

I will only mention that Acts 3 teaches us that the times of refreshing will come by the presence of the Lord, when He shall have sent Jesus; that then the glorious things spoken of by the prophets will have their accomplishment, but not before. It is not till after the fulness of the Gentiles (i.e., all the church from among the Gentiles) shall have come in, that God will save Israel; and it is only when the Lord will have put an end to the times of the Gentiles and crushed the image, that the little stone will grow and become a mountain which will fill all the earth (Dan. 2:33, 34); finally, the Lord will come to execute judgment on the nations, which evidently will close the dispensation. Then the Jews will be recognised as the nation favoured by God, which is an impossible thing as long as the present dispensation lasts. The author of the pamphlet will allow me to tell him, that to ground his argument with regard to the church and the present dispensation on the assertion that Ephesians 1:10 is sufficiently explained in Galatians 4:4, is not the way to commend it to those who have ever so little studied the word. It is evident that there will be a dispensation in which the Lord shall reign in righteousness; now He is dealing in the patience of grace.44 Let us now prove by direct evidence, that this dispensation, at its end, will be in a state of ruin and not of restitution. The Lord tells us that, as it was in the

days of Noe, and of Lot, so shall it be “when the Son of man is revealed.” There were, however, faithful persons then, whom God knew how to preserve; well! does not the author believe that the world, at the time of Noe and of Lot, was in a fallen, ruined state? Thus shall it be when the Son of man shall be revealed. The state of things then existing was one of ruin, although there were faithful persons. It may be called economy, dispensation, what you please; the force of the truth here is obvious.

As to 2 Timothy 3, I have not quoted it in the thought that it could by itself shew the existence of an apostasy; but to shew that the word of God always presents to us the picture of the ruin of the state of things established by God—a ruin which the presence of a few faithful ones cannot prevent—a ruin which will terminate by the complete apostasy, and the manifestation of the Antichrist, and which will be closed by cutting off. Perilous times shall come: this is all that our brother sees; but in what consists the difficulty of those times? It is this: that men, Christians by profession, are found again in the reprobate condition of the Gentiles, depicted in Romans 1. And it is added that evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse. It is said, that men shall be in this state. Is not that a state of ruin, a fallen condition, when the description of Christendom is that men shall be such as the Gentiles, whom God had given over to a mind void of judgment? Compare Romans 1 and 2 and 2 Timothy 3. In the original the resemblance between them is even more striking. Therefore difficult times are not only spoken of, but the special character of those times is shewn. We may add that, when the times are so difficult that there is need of extraordinary

warnings, it is evident that it must be a general state—a state that characterises the dispensation, and more or less in contrast with that of the first times. Thus what is read in 2 Thessalonians 2—the great apostasy—is not yet consummated. But in the application of this passage to the general destiny of the economy, I assert that it teaches us of the mystery of lawlessness which had commenced working from the time of the apostle, was to continue, and that which restrained being taken away, that the lawless one should be revealed, whom the Lord should destroy by the appearing of His coming; and that, previous to this, the apostasy should take place.

Is not that the ruin of the dispensation, the manifestation of an apostasy, the principles of which were already at work in the apostle's time, and only waited till that which restrained was taken out of the way, to manifest themselves in the lawless one? The author says that this does not prove that the dispensation is closed. I do not believe that it is closed, and I have not said so; but it reveals the ruin of the dispensation— a ruin, the instrument of which was already at work, and which ends in apostasy and in judgment. That is what I said.

In the word of God we see two great mysteries, which develop themselves during the present dispensation: the mystery of Christ, and the mystery of lawlessness. The counsels of God, engaged in the first, have their accomplishment in heaven. The union of the body of Christ with Himself in glory will evidently have its accomplishment there on high. But, by the power of the Holy Spirit, there ought to be on earth during this dispensation the manifestation of the union of the body of Christ. But here the responsibility of man comes in for

its share in this manifestation here below, although in the end all will be to the glory of God. Therefore the dispensation may be in a state of ruin, although the counsels of God never fail; on the contrary, our lie will turn to His glory, although He judges righteously.

In this sphere of man's responsibility, Satan can introduce himself the moment that man fails to lean absolutely upon God. We know this by every day's experience.

It is, then, revealed that the mystery of lawlessness will have its course. Here it is not a question of counsels, but of an evil done in time. The question here is of this mystery of lawlessness; the apostasy or falling away is not a mystery. There is no need of a revelation to inform us that a man who denies Jesus Christ is not a Christian; he says it. But in this case, it is an evil that has commenced working in the bosom of Christendom, in relation with Christianity; a mystery of which the lawless one will be the full revelation, as the glory of Christ and of the Church will be the full accomplishment of the mystery of Jesus Christ. The words translated, in most versions, "iniquity," and "wicked one," are the same in the original; save that one indicates the thing, and the other the person. It is "lawlessness" and the "lawless one" preeminently. This mystery of lawlessness commenced working in the apostle's time: later the veil would be removed. The apostasy would be then: and at length the lawless one would come to his end by the appearing of the coming of Christ. Thus is the dispensation to be brought to an end: this is what we have revealed in this passage. Hence, as we see elsewhere, this will be to introduce the glory and reign

of Christ, so that all the earth may be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God.

Whatever Christians and theologians may have said on the parable of the tares (Matt. 13), I may be allowed to say that it teaches us quite a different thing from what our dear brother finds there (p. 55). He tells us that ‘wherever the Lord shall sow or cause to be sowed the good seed, the enemy will also come to sow tares, and that it will be so till the end.’ This is not at all what the parable states, though the thing may be true in itself.

The word gives us a similitude of the kingdom of heaven, to which this dispensation belongs, and of which it forms a part. There is no other sower but the Son of man, and the work which He has done is marred, not as to the barn, because He will know how to separate the wheat from the tares, but as to the world, in which the work of this dispensation takes place. We see also that the evil, which introduced itself in the beginning by the carelessness of men, cannot be repaired by men as a whole, and in this world. For this is a dispensation of grace and not of judgment.

The counsels as to the wheat cannot fail—it will be in the barn. But the work, with respect to this world, has been marred; because men have been entrusted with it, and their carelessness has given occasion to the enemy’s work, to which no remedy can be brought, as long as the dispensation subsists. I have not said that this parable proved that the evil was to go on increasing; but I said that the Lord had pronounced this judgment: viz., that the servants could not remedy this state of things. Is not this what the parable says? It is never said in the word that the apostasy would choke the wheat, or the faithful.

There will be faithful ones under the Antichrist, as we have seen, although it be certain that the apostasy will then exist. As for me, I only dare to say what the word has foretold. I behold an evil, to which the neglect of man has given rise, which has marred the Lord's work, as to its state and as a whole in the world, which the Saviour alone can remedy, and which He will remedy in putting an end to this dispensation, this age, by the harvest.

I beseech those who desire to know the thoughts of God, very carefully to compare what I have said with the texts quoted, and to see if all is correct. Our brother passes over Jude, because what I have said is obscure. I will endeavour to make it clearer. I say that the word of God teaches us that the evil which will be the object of the judgment of the Lord Jesus, at His coming, entered into the church from its commencement; that this evil is to continue, and that, notwithstanding all the goodness and patience of God, He will bring it into judgment. I quote Jude in support of this assertion. He teaches us that certain men had already crept into the church who were marked out beforehand for this sentence. Although at that time those persons were not as yet so manifested, he gives them, by the spirit of prophecy, these three characters: the natural hatred of a heart alienated from God, like that of Cain; the teaching of error for reward, as Balaam; and open rebellion like that of Core. In this last stage they perish. He says, it is of those that Enoch prophesied when he said that the Lord would come with His holy myriads to judge those who have spoken against Him, etc. However, there will be faithful ones; but already, even at the time of Jude, the evil, which is to

end in open rebellion and which is to be the object of the judgment of Christ at His coming, existed in the church.

Examine the epistle (it is not so long), and see if it does not speak of an evil which has already crept into the church, and which would bring in the judgment of persons who were still hidden, but who, being more fully manifested, would be the object of this judgment. What is the impression produced by the epistle, if it be not that of a warning to a faithful remnant again a terrible evil which would bring in this judgment— against an evil which then existed in the bosom of the church, of which the condition of Sodom and Gomorrha, and of the fallen angels, presented the fearful but just picture? Was not that a state of ruin and of failure, which was only budding, it is true, at that time, but of which the features and the end were not hidden from the prophetic Spirit in the apostle? If there be obscurity in all this, at least there is in this obscurity a dreadful shadow, a shadow which God has placed there, and which should urge us not to pass over it too easily, especially when so grave a matter is in question as the destiny of the church.

Here I have an important remark to add. This epistle of Jude, which in an especial manner treats of the ruin, as well as that of John, which puts the faithful on their guard against the antichrists, by no means address themselves to a church, but to all who compose the church in general, to the faithful as having a common interest, a common destiny. The same may be said of the second epistle of Peter, which also speaks of the same, although it has a character more in relation to the Christians from among the Jews.

The author of the pamphlet sets aside all that can be quoted from the Revelation. We know that the Spirit has said, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand.” And I cannot refrain from saying, that it is precisely on the point in question that this warning and promise become so important.

I do not wish to enter into details on the Revelation; but I ask what this book presents to us in its prophetic part, when Laodicea (the last of* the churches mentioned) has been spued out of the Lord’s mouth, and when John is taken up to heaven? Is it the establishment of the dispensation in blessing, or very positive prophecies of misery and judgment? As for me, I find that the kings of the earth will be gathered together by unclean spirits to make war against the Lamb; that Babylon the great will corrupt the whole earth, till she is judged; and that the clusters of the vine of the earth will be cast into the winepress of the wrath of God, and trodden in the winepress of His anger; finally, that the kings of the earth, persevering in evil, will give their power to the beast, and that, through the judgment of God upon them, they will have one and the same will to do so.

I do not now interpret, I take these things as a whole. Do they not announce, including the vine of the earth, a state of corruption, of apostasy, finally of cutting off, before the beginning of the thousand years of blessing which will come in by the presence of the Lord? I do not think the church has done any good by setting aside such solemn warnings; the more so, because God has attached a special blessing to those who listen to them. If the author of the pamphlet does not himself desire to

dwell upon this, let him not be surprised if someone draws the attention of the children of God to such portions of the word. Let him allow me to remind him that, if this book were addressed to the then existing churches, the question, in what was addressed to them, was not of churches, but of ruin, apostasy, and of judgment. This is the future which is presented, when John ascends up to heaven. If there be churches, let them take heed to it.

In 1 John 2:18, we have a very striking example of the way in which the latter times presented themselves to the mind of the apostle, to the spirit of prophecy which God had given him. These times were to be known by the presence of evil, of the Antichrist, and besides by this that, even in the times of the apostles, the signs were there. “You have heard that Antichrist shall come”: it was a subject of which even little children in Christ were informed. “Even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” Finally, the apostle directs the attention of the little children to the coming of the Saviour. One may surely admit, that the presence of the Antichrist is a sign of the ruin not of the faithful, but of the dispensation as a whole, and of its approaching cutting off. Is it not also true, that this passage in John confirms the testimony borne to this truth, that the evil which would occasion the cutting off had introduced itself from the very beginning, and would continue until God executed the judgment, which would destroy the lawless one, and that in consequence the dispensation would not be restored?

If the patience of God has endured the evil for a long time, does that imply that the judgment will be less certain for Him with whom a thousand years are as one

day, and one day as a thousand years, or for the faith that cleaves to His word alone?

I come now to Romans 11. Here the arguments of the author of the pamphlet are rather against the apostle than against me. He says that, in order that the cutting off of the dispensation may take place, the Jews as well as the Gentiles must be found in it. Has he never heard, in the word, of the churches of the Gentiles; of an apostle of the Gentiles; of a reception of the Gentiles as a body, when the Jews had been cut off; of Gentiles upon whom the name of God was to be invoked? … It is true that, as to the fundamental principle of the church, there was in it neither Jew nor Gentile, because all were looked upon as risen together with Christ; but as to the earthly dispensation of the church, there was an apostle of the Gentiles and an apostle of the circumcision. There was this distinction—"To the Jew first, and also to the Greek"; and it is of this earthly dispensation that we are speaking.45 I believe our brother will find that the death of Stephen was the occasion of an important change in this respect; it is that of which we are speaking. The Jews were then guilty, because they had rejected not only the Son of man, but also the witness given by the Spirit to the glory of Jesus.

The apostle here speaks of the branches grafted into the good olive tree instead of those which had been broken off; he speaks of the dispensation of the promises of God. This already is an important principle. He speaks of the Gentiles, as having taken the place of the Jews, in the enjoyment of the dispensation of the promises (see verses 12, 13); because the Jews were broken off from their olive tree dispensationally. It is evident that the faithful amongst them were not broken off from Christ—

very far from it, they enjoyed communion with Him in an infinitely higher way than that which they possessed before; but, as a dispensation, the Jewish branches had been broken off. There are then, besides the union of Christ with the faithful, privileges enjoyed as a dispensation, which may be lost; for the Jews, as a dispensation, had lost them. The apostle tells us, moreover, that the Gentiles had been put in the place of the Jews, in this position; it is not I that say so, but the apostle. He tells us also, that in this position they, as the Jews, are responsible, and may be cut off, as the Jews have been, although the remnant enjoyed, subsequent to this cutting off, still higher privileges, as the faithful of the present dispensation will enjoy with the Lord in glory during the reign of a thousand years, although the dispensation in which they were faithful be terminated; that is, though God will have put an end to the present dispensation, in the which He now places Himself in relation with men here below.

In different dispensations, God puts Himself in relation with men, on certain principles; He judges them according to those principles. If those who are found in this outward relationship are unfaithful to the principles of the dispensation, although God may long forbear, He puts an end to it, while at the same time preserving the faithful for Himself; this is what He has done as to the Jewish dispensation. Well! this chapter informs us that the Gentiles have been graffed into the place of the Jews. Mark, that in making this statement, I do not argue concerning what ought to be, but I quote the revelation of God contained in this chapter. The Holy Ghost speaks to Gentiles, He places them under their

responsibility, and threatens them with the same fate as Israel.

Let us examine more closely this chapter. First, the apostle distinguishes between the counsels of God, and the enjoyment of privileges attached to the dispensation. As to the counsels of God, the Jews, as a nation, were to enjoy promises, which had been made to them in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, notwithstanding all that might happen, for “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” It is moreover what will happen in another dispensation in the world46 to come. In the present dispensation,47 what is presented to us is one body, gathered together from all nations, for heaven. But as to the dispensation of God, the Jews were to be cut off, until the fulness of the Gentiles had come in; and the setting aside of the dispensation was not to prevent a remnant being spared and saved: this is what the apostle set forth in the beginning of the chapter.

The counsels of God remain firm, as to the Jews, although the Jewish dispensation be set aside, and a remnant preserved— notwithstanding their apostasy and cutting off, to form part of another dispensation. In the meantime, this remnant has lost its Jewish character, and what is before us is the bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles, after which God will again take up His counsels and dealings with the Jewish nation. Set aside during this dispensation, but kept by the powerful hand of God, judicially blinded, and enemies concerning the gospel, this nation is nevertheless beloved for the fathers’ sakes. This rejection of the Jews is the reconciling of the world. The Gentiles are graffed into the good olive tree of the promises made to the fathers, and, says the apostle, under the same responsibility that

had resulted in the cutting off of the Jewish branches. So that, if they did not continue in the goodness of God, they would also be cut off; they were to take heed, not to entertain the idea that they could not fall as the Jews had fallen, seeing that they were subject to the same conditions: “on them which fell, severity.” The mystery of iniquity; the sleep during which the enemy sows the tares; perilous times; the state of Christians which is like that of the heathen; finally, the apostasy, or the falling away: all this is not, it appears to me, continuing in the goodness of God.

Moreover, the apostle would not have us to be ignorant of this mystery, that there is a fulness of the Gentiles to come in, and that then Israel will be saved as a nation by the coming of the Deliverer, who will come out of Sion and who will turn away ungodliness from Jacob. So Israel, Jacob, the nation, will be saved, for the counsels of God do not change. But is it in this dispensation? By no means; this has, for its first principle, the absence of the Saviour, and a heavenly calling, by the presence of another Comforter, who unites us to Jesus in the heavenlies, and who, in communicating to us His perfect and accomplished salvation, causes us to walk as pilgrims and strangers here below, being one body with Him who is on high, wrestling against wicked spirits in heavenly places, and passing through a world called “this present evil age,” while taking up our cross to follow Jesus in His humiliation. But Israel will be saved, when the Deliverer shall come out of Sion. The world will be blessed by the presence and the reign of the Saviour; the present evil age will have terminated; Satan will be bound; the glory of this world, instead of being a snare laid by the enemy to turn away the faithful from

their heavenly calling, will be the glory of Christ Himself; the enjoyment of all that this world can give will be the portion of the faithful here below, instead of the cross. Is this the same dispensation? In the place of the grace that endures all things, and which, while submitting to all things, commits itself to Him who judges righteously, it will be a kingdom of righteousness, which will not permit evil, because Jesus will have taken His great power and will act as a king. Yes, the presence and the reign of Jesus will bring in this immense change. In a word, whilst now we have to follow Jesus in His humiliation and rejection— precious participation in His sufferings, so that we may be glorified together, then it will be the presence of Jesus reigning in power. It will be the dispensation of the fulness of times. The Jews will be a separate nation, and all the promises made to the fathers will be fulfilled on their behalf. I speak now of the earthly part of this dispensation, of that which concerns the world and the Jews; for much better things are reserved for those who will have suffered with Christ, and who will then be made equal to the angels, and even placed in a position above them; so that all things in the heavens and on the earth will be thus gathered together under one head, gathered together in one, even in Jesus, the centre of blessing, the manifestation of the power and the glory of the “most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.”

No; the faith and hope that is founded on the word, cannot recognise the present evil age, during which Jesus is absent, as this dispensation of the fulness of times. But there is a verse, the translation of which has helped on this false interpretation, namely, Romans 11:31. This is the true translation: “So these also have

now not believed in your mercy, in order that they, also, may be objects of mercy. For God hath shut up together all in unbelief, in order that He might shew mercy to all." The Jews were the objects of the promises, and the Gentiles of pure mercy. Jesus came to fulfil the promises made to the fathers: the Jews have rejected Him; and, further, they have refused and rejected the revelation of the mercy shewn to the Gentiles, thus filling up the measure of their sins, so that the wrath of God "is come upon them to the uttermost," 1 Thess. 2:16. So they also, being shut up in unbelief, become objects of pure mercy, like the Gentiles, although according to the flesh they had been heirs of the promises. This it is brings out the riches of the wisdom of God in a manner surprising to our hearts.

I beseech those who take an interest in these subjects to be so good as to examine the Greek to see if that could be otherwise translated; for my part, nothing is clearer. I should not have entered upon the domain of criticism, had not our brother appealed to this passage as a triumphant proof that there is one dispensation only to the end. To me, as to the apostle, it is a grand example of the wisdom of God, who has known how to combine with faithfulness towards His people, rendered still more striking by means of this, the grace which shews mercy unto them, as a sinful and guilty nation that has rejected the promises—a wisdom which, by means of this temporary reception, calls in the Gentiles, not to be an earthly people, although they be tried on the earth, but to fill the heavens with His glory. Then having recalled His ancient people to the enjoyment of the promises, He will make manifest to them, as well as to the world, that He could love poor sinners, as He loved His well-beloved

Son, and make them partakers of the same glory in virtue of their union with Jesus, to the praise of His glory. Shall I say that it is the same dispensation as at present, where I am travelling in sorrow, although joyous, sighing for that bright day in which I shall see that dear Saviour, who has so loved me as to give Himself for me, and in which (infinite blessing!) I shall be made like unto Him? Shall I not rather say: come quickly, Lord Jesus, come quickly!

In short, our brother says, that he sees a threat to the Gentiles. I ask, a threat of what? Is it not of being cut off? And now let us look around and see if the Gentiles, who have been graffed into the place of the Jews—if Christendom—has continued in the goodness of God. It is unnecessary to speak of the Roman system, although, doubtless, there are souls saved in that system. Neither will we speak of the Greeks, who barely subsist under the domination of the Mohammedans—that scourge sent by God, or who are plunged in the superstition of a reigning hierarchy. Let us consider the countries where the light of protestantism has penetrated. For the most part they are sunk in unbelief; and barely an individual believer here or there is found, who fights against the general unbelief. The greater part of those who are called ministers are not converted. They are unconverted pastors, who are set over flocks of unbelievers, or who pretend to feed even the true sheep of the Lord, but who drive them away. These ministers are nominated, not by the Spirit of God, nor by the church, in any way whatever, but by the civil authorities, who have no office in the church (although all believers own them in that which has regard to their civil office). What do we see, in short? The Lord’s sheep dispersed

and scattered. It is an assembly of unbelievers administered and governed by persons who perhaps have not even the profession of Christianity, which is called the church. Believers generally find themselves confounded with this assembly, and those who are at the head are invested with the pre-eminence as with a civil right.

Compare this state of things, of which I have given but a sketch, these principal features admitted by all, with what is said of the church of God in the New Testament —in the Acts, in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Is the dispensation in a state of declension? Has it continued in the goodness of God? Has the separation of some faithful persons changed this state of things? What conclusion do I desire to draw from this? A deep humiliation on the part of the faithful, whatever the author of the pamphlet may say. Here he will allow me to make an observation. He complains, that I say “we,” in speaking of the church, of its misery, and its ruin. He himself has been faithful, he says; be it so! I deny it not; I bless God for it. But, for my part, and miserable as I know myself to be, I prefer to identify myself with the sorrows, the misery, and even the failure of the whole church. I do not wish to add to it my own unbelief; but, even if I had walked like these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, I would rather say with one of them, “O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him. Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws which he set before us,” Dan. 9:8-10.

If I know how to bring but little profit, little strength to that which has fallen, though avoiding the evil, I will at least bring to it my tears, my sympathies, and my testimony, which the spirit of Christ also seems to me to bring. Moreover, individual faithfulness does not prevent one feeling, in spite of oneself, the effect of the unfaithfulness of the body of which one forms a part. Although Joshua and Caleb in the end reaped the effect of their faithfulness, they experienced also, during the passage through the wilderness, the effect of the unbelief of the assembly; nevertheless, not without receiving consolations and a strength in their hearts, which the rest of the people did not enjoy. The members of the same body ought to suffer from the misery of the other members through love, through the spirit of Christ and of charity. If they will not do it through love, they do it through necessity. Although our dear brother is unwilling to say “we,” I do not think he can escape from the consequences of the general state of the church. But all that is the result of his having lost the idea of the unity of the body, this precious bond of charity.

I repeat here what I said in the pamphlet: people forget the want of power, when they think it possible to follow the apostles because they have their writings. This is what the author does, when he says, “By following in the administration of the church, and in the establishment of different charges, the rules which the apostles have left us” (p. 36).

But was there not an administrative power, a power acting in the apostles, which we cannot pretend to? Was there not in the establishing of charges an authority which we cannot arrogate to ourselves? Compare what the author says. As to this power, says he, God never

refuses it to anyone (p. 85). Did there not exist in the primitive church other power than obedience to apostolic laws? I set no limit to the blessing of the church now, but it is not by denying the existence of the power which existed at that period that it will be found again. When our brother says that if the apostasy were to become general, it should have been predicted that the tares would choke the good seed. The answer is, that this is not what is predicted in the word. When all worship the beast, except those whose names are written in the book of life, the apostasy will be general; but the tares will not choke the wheat, for God never leaves Himself without a witness. There will be a time, it is true, in which human testimony will cease, but then God will bear witness to Himself by His signal vengeance upon His enemies.

## Supplementary Observations

I have yet to add a few remarks in addition to the observations that I have been making on the pamphlet of our dear brother. The important point to notice, for the well-being of the whole church, is, in the first place, the fundamental and very serious error, which consists in the denial of the unity of the church of Christ—a unity such that it should manifest itself on earth by the presence and the power of the one Spirit during this dispensation. Secondly, the confusion of this dispensation with that of the fulness of times.

These two errors suffice to obscure or to warp the judgment on all that concerns the present state of the dispensation, and on the whole subject of the church of God here below. For my part, I think I see, along with our dear brother, the hand of God in that he has been

constrained to state them clearly, so that they should be examined by the word in all patience and love, and that the brethren, asking of God the help of His Spirit, might form their judgment according to the word, where the truth lies as to these points. The author says (p. 81), to choose, to nominate, to establish, is more scriptural than to own. To own is also scriptural (1 Thess. 5:12)—with this difference, however, that the word of God calls on all the faithful persons to own and never to choose gifts, nor even elders, as we have seen.

Nay, further, when a person is owned, the heart, the conscience, the affections, and respect are engaged; it is a bond, a bond formed by the exercise of the gift, in the heart of such who have profited thereby. The heart that has received blessing responds to the action of the Holy Spirit, which has taken place by means of the brother who has been its instrument; and thus the heart attaches itself to that instrument, and owns God in him; it is God's will that it should be so, and He binds together the members of the body by these mutual helps. And this is very especially applicable to a pastor, whose task is, to my mind, the most difficult that exists. What powerful bond does there not result when we own one from whom we have received blessing, who has led us on, counselled us, warned us, and preserved us from danger, and has made us know God—our God—better! The fact is that, according to my experience, there is more danger of overvaluing than of undervaluing a true pastor. Nevertheless, I see that the apostle puts a very great value upon such affections. Can one compare a vote of the church to bonds thus formed?

I do not deny that apostolic authority may have been of use, in certain cases, to give a sanction to the office of

elder. This is what can never be done by the vote of a church, where perhaps new converts are called to determine a matter requiring the greatest spiritual discernment. It is never said that an apostle nominates a pastor, seeing that a pastor is a gift coming directly from God. They did choose elders. It was an office for which the gift of feeding the flock of God, in one way or another, was necessary or suitable. But they could not nominate to a gift—a very important distinction for us, because we can enjoy the gift, without there being any one with authority to appoint an elder. Besides, I put no limit to what the Holy Spirit can do in this respect by counsel and a truly spiritual wisdom, although there be no apostle. It is my wish that all that the Holy Spirit gives may in all respects be freely exercised. It is not here a question of right, of authority, but of duty, of charity, of those bowels of love, which spends itself for the flock of God, which desires that all that God has given may be used in its place. There is no rule for that. The Holy Spirit always justifies Himself in His work. If any one acts against the word, it is evident that it is not the Holy Spirit who led him to act. When Paul besought Apollos to go to Corinth, and Titus to remain in Crete, it was not a regulation for the church; but the word has given us such things, not in order that each one may always follow them, but as the precious tracks of the ways of the Spirit of God.

And here we must again notice this principle: that what concerns the individual conscience is at all times obligatory, and that God always gives strength to accomplish that which He requires from faith. We have only to obey. But it is not so with the things that relate to the administration of the church; because they suppose

a certain state of things, a power of administration, a strength acting in this respect, which is not given to all. If God tells me to turn away from certain persons, not to bear the same yoke with unbelievers, this does not concern an administrative function, but individual faithfulness. Consequently, there are rules which are not necessarily for all times. It does not follow from this, it is true, that there are no churches, but it follows from it that the church, or believers, may, in certain cases, be incapable of following all the rules, although the rules be there.

There is still a difference to point out between this dispensation and the Jewish dispensation. In the Jewish dispensation, the branches cut off were natural branches, so that, although sin occasioned the cutting off, it was not sin that had given them their place on the good olive tree. But in the present dispensation, as it is a remnant according to the Spirit,48 which is of the essence of the dispensation, it is clear that the introduction of the wild branches has been occasioned by sin. “While men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares.” At least, if it was not absolutely sin that introduced these branches, they were, however, never legitimate, and they would very soon have been manifested, if there had been entire faithfulness. But it has not been so, and in consequence the branches must be finally cut off, and the faithful gathered in for a dispensation of glory, in order to reign with the Lord a thousand years, the dispensation being thus fully brought to an end.

As to presidency, there is one more explanation to give. I do not find that the word ‘president’ is employed in the word of God in the sense of presiding in an assembly. In

this sentence, “that he who presides,49 let him do it with diligence,” it is the same word which is translated to rule in this text, “If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God,” Rom. 12:8; 1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12.

The choice of presidents is nowhere to be found, as we have said. The maintenance of proper order in a large gathering by grave brethren, such as terminating at a suitable time, making communications to brethren, and other similar things, breaking the bread, if the Supper is taken; these are things against which, for my part, I have no objection to make, provided worship takes place by the Spirit of God in the assembly, and not through the means of a president. I do not feel the need of saying much on this point. As to the details of circumstances, they are almost indifferent to me, provided there be gravity, order, and the liberty of the Holy Spirit in the worship that takes place. I should not have said so much, were it not for fear of being misunderstood. It is God who alone can bring us to the proposed end.

## Remarks upon the “Report of the Evangelical Society of Geneva, for 1841”

They have put into my hands the Report of the Evangelical Society, in which the matter that occupies us has also been discussed, from the very beginning of the different reports. I pray God with all my heart, that the work the Society is engaged in may be blessed, whatever may be the way in which it is conducted. I only wish here to draw attention to the arguments which have been used on the subject of ministry, and to shew how far a false idea can lead astray true Christians. All, it is said, should work for the advancement of the

kingdom of God; but if there is not a priesthood, there is a ministry (page 60 of the Report).

Let us mark this well. In this passage of the Report, ministry does not mean service rendered to God and to men, whether of evangelisation, or of faithful care amongst those who have already been brought into the Lord's sheepfold; but it means a body of men, to whom belongs the right of exercising their ministry j of men who are, as it is said, a few lines lower down, a government in Christian churches. In short, ministry does not mean a certain service, or the subject of testimony with which this service is occupied (as it might be said, for instance, the ministry of the apostle, to designate his service; the ministry of the gospel, to designate the subject matter of testimony); but what has been falsely called the Clergy. I fully acknowledge a ministry (that is, a service rendered by God to men, by means of men raised up by God to this end), whether it be that this ministry is exercised towards the world in evangelisation, or is exercised in the church by gifts and suitable instruments of every kind. "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation," etc., Rom. 12:6-8, etc. Peter also said, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God," etc., 1 Pet. 4:10.

Finally, Jesus Himself approves of those, as faithful servants, who have traded with the gift that He entrusted to them, because they have sufficient confidence in Him to labour without further authority

than the communication of the gift; and intelligence enough to understand that God does not light a candle to put it under a bushel. But this is not the meaning of the word ministry, in the paragraph we have just quoted. There the ministry is contrasted with the work of Priscilla, and Aquila, and of Origen before his ordination. “They were only simple believers,” but besides that, “there is a ministry,” that is, a clergy. Christian churches need a government.

The whole force of this argument rests on the confusion that is made of the ministry with the established clergy, with a body of teachers, nominated and set apart by man. The author of the report cites, in support of this, 1 Corinthians 12:28: “God hath set some in the church.” We will content ourselves with what the reporter says himself elsewhere; not man, but God. I do not think that he wishes to make apostles, and who was it that ordained prophets, teachers? But it suffices to say that the apostle only speaks here of the operation of the Holy Spirit. “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” This is how God appoints.

Ephesians 4:11, 12, is quoted; but I find here that Christ has bestowed the gifts, and in nowise that man made a body of those who possessed them. I find that the apostle, in the Epistle to the Galatians, asserts, as his glory, that his ministry was not of men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, and by God the Father. Who was it that set apart the prophets when it is said “so that all may speak and that all may be edified?” Who from among men ordained those that, at the time of the persecution which took place at the death of Stephen, went everywhere preaching the word? Where is it said that

these teachers, whom Christ had given as gifts, were ordained? What connection is there between all that and ordination, or a mission on the part of man? Is there no difference between the Lord Jesus, the head of the body, who imparts gifts to men by the Holy Spirit, according to His good pleasure, and an academy for bringing up a clergy? Is it then intended to educate apostles, for they are mentioned here just as much as teachers?50 What an extraordinary confusion is found in the mind of man, the instant he desires to be something!

Let us examine the other passages quoted. Romans 10:14, 15: “How shall they preach except they be sent? How beautiful are the feet of them who preach the gospel of peace.” Is it then a clergy? Was it man who at that time sent out the apostle and others to preach the gospel? Was the apostle mistaken when he said, Not of man, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ? Was he not then one of those who were sent? What a singular feeling of self-satisfaction must exist, when after sent is added “by men” and when God is thus found excluded from this glorious privilege and the prerogatives of His grace. In short, who is it that says here that it is men who ought to serid them? Romans 12:6-8 says not a word of ordination for the ministry; on the contrary, it is said that each one ought to act according to the gift which has been entrusted to him. “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God,” 1 Cor. 4:1, 2. Because I ought to consider the apostle as a minister of Christ, does it follow from this, that there ought to be a clergy in the church of God? I am perhaps slow of apprehension, but I see no sequence in this reasoning, although I heartily acknowledge the apostle to be what he says. But does

the reporter hold the clergy, from which he has separated himself,51 to be what the apostle was? If not, the point in question is clearly quite another thing. God had sent the apostle; it was necessary to acknowledge him as such; but if one desires to find out how, it will not be difficult to discern in this very epistle, that it was not because he was sent and ordained by men: “Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it,” Col. 4:17. Who says that Archippus had received this ministry through the intervention of man?

I find in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25), that faithfulness consisted in that they had acted on their own responsibility, without waiting for anything further than the communication of the gift on the part of Christ, because they had a right confidence in the goodness of their Master and the understanding of His will. He who would have had some other warrant, was condemned out of his own mouth. I am far from putting ordained men in this category; I speak only of the grand principle; for many among them have laboured faithfully in the sphere they have given themselves, and have even acted with a good conscience in this respect. Perhaps they may be found somewhat of the number of those who have put out their money to the banker.

In conclusion, I have nothing to say for my part against the laying on of hands in itself. I do not speak of that laying on of hands which bestowed gifts, but of that which can be given to any brother approved in the kingdom of God, who has acted on his own responsibility, and with the knowledge of the grace of God, the only real motive owned by God, and who is desirous of being recommended to the grace of God for

a special work; in that case, it is all very well. It is what happened to Paul, who received the laying on of hands from the laity (as they say), not to receive authority, nor to be placed amongst the clergy, but to be recommended to the grace of God. It appears, indeed, that this was repeated: compare Acts 15:40, and chap. 14:26, with chap. 13:3. That is a very precious thing, but quite in contrast with a ministry transmissible and authorised by men, into which introduction takes place by the intervention of men, by its preparatory education, as if it were a trade.

Let us continue the examination of the passages. The reporter only quotes one more passage which we will look at in a moment. “And those who trust to the choice made by the churches, of those to whom some ministry was confided.” (At the end of page 60 of the Report.) Some ministry was confided! I am astonished! Some ministry! Did the churches choose the apostles, the prophets, the teachers, the evangelists? There were those, it is true, who said, “I am of Paul, of Cephas, of Apollos” —others who have had itching ears. What then is the subject of the passages quoted? Nothing but tables and money. The apostles, because they had the ministry of the word, which was the object, not of the choice of men, but of that of God, requested that men should be chosen to administer the money entrusted to them by the church, because it did not become those who had the ministry given of God to leave it to attend to temporal matters. In like manner, the apostle, careful to provide things honest even before men, was unwilling to take the money, unless there was someone, chosen on the part of the church, to take charge of it together with him. “Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this

abundance, which is administered by us, providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men," 2 Cor. 8:20, 21.

I have reserved one more quotation, because it is presented to us at length, and I doubt if there be found, even amongst the abettors of popery, an idea so monstrous, and so astounding on this subject. Let us recollect, that the point in question is the institution of a ministry, of a body of men set apart for this service, of the clergy, in short. "If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory"; "for," adds the apostle, "if that which is done away is glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious," 2 Cor. 3:9-11. I assure [my reader] that I have read again and again this passage and the paragraph where it is quoted, thinking to surprise myself in some confusion of ideas, because it seemed impossible to me that a Christian could make such an application. But no; such is the case. According to the Report, the clergy, the ministry that God established for the primitive church, is the glory which remains. The apostle does not speak of the subject of his ministry, in contrast with the condemnation and death pronounced by the law, at the glory of which in consequence man could not look; it is not the glory of the Lord with unveiled face in the Person of Jesus Christ; no! it is the established ministry, it is the ministerial system, it is a separate class of men, a clergy; this is the glorious thing that is to remain! Is it possible to go to greater lengths?

Even if elders were subjected to the laying on of hands, which is never said, where is it seen that those who exercised the ministry were subjected to it? where is

this idea found, that it was only elders who could exercise the ministry? It would be very difficult to prove such a system by the word, and indeed it is never quoted; I appeal to the citations already made by the reporter on the subject of the ministry. He says, that “it is forbidden also to choose ministers amongst new converts.” That is said of the elders, of overseers, but not of ministers: the mingling of these two things is quite unscriptural, although the elders ought to have been fit to teach. But who could have believed, that an attempt would be made to prove that it was forbidden to choose ministers amongst new converts, whilst young men are brought up for the ministry, and that elders or bishops are made of them by the consecration of men, as soon as they have finished their studies? Where is it said in the passages alluded to, and in which the qualities which bishops should possess are specified, “that they ought to receive solemnly the imposition of hands from the assembly of the elders”? When Titus was sent to appoint elders in every city, from what assembly of elders did they receive the imposition of hands?

It is singular enough that, although laying on of hands took place for all sorts of cases, as for the blessing of children, on the sick, on an apostle, to impart the Holy Spirit to all believers, or for a special gift—as to Timothy —finally, on those who were chosen to be deacons; and that thus it is probable that hands were laid on elders, when all things were done in order: it is, I say, singular that the word is perfectly silent on the subject. For my own part, I have no doubt, that as God had foreseen the abuse that would exist as to the Virgin Mary, and that in His grace He always shews her as repelled by the Lord Jesus during His ministry, so likewise God, foreseeing

also the abuse of a custom, which probably existed at first, was perfectly silent on the subject; so that the Clergy, of which the system was foreknown to Him, as all things, might never have the semblance of His authority to make it a separate class,52 and by this means to exalt itself, as if it were the ministry of God. We know what has been the result.

As to the circumstances which have given rise to the exposition of the principle which we are commenting upon, I do not meddle with them: I occupy myself with principles only. It may perhaps appear extraordinary to comment upon a report. I reply, that it is not only a report, but a direct attack against certain principles, and the setting forth of other principles, which are given as more biblical: this is a proper subject for discussion.

There is, in the report itself, a singular and striking effect of the principles therein set forth:—

Mr. Such-an-one, minister of the holy gospel.

Mr. Such-an-one, evangelist.

This is rather comical. There are evangelists who are not ministers (I suppose according to Ephesians 4:11, 12, quoted in p. 61 of the report); and ministers of the holy gospel, who are not evangelists; and, what is more, evangelists, who are not ministers of the holy gospel. It is the ordination of man which makes this strange distinction. May God make them to be good evangelists, and good ministers of the holy gospel! But, truly, the wisdom of man is folly in the sight of God; and the folly of God is wiser than the wisdom of men. Thanks be abundantly given to Him, for that He is good enough to pass over the littleness of the folly of man, and bless according to His sovereign grace those He sends! And I

pray Him therefore, that, in His grace, He may keep from the pride that attaches itself to a human distinction those, who, not content with being evangelists sent by Him, have had themselves made by men ministers of the holy gospel.

Let us hasten, however, to find some roses in the midst of these thorns. I quote another report: “To pretend to distinguish here, as it is too often done amongst us, the ministry of preaching, and that of the sacraments (as if one of these ministries, exercised without the authority of the clergy, constituted, more than others, a separation), is to go beyond the scripture, and contrary to it” (page 25 of the report). I do not quote these words of the dear brother, who is the reporter, to lead others to think that he agrees with the principles of my pamphlet. It is clear enough that he does not. I take the words as they are,53 as a testimony which, by dint of circumstances, pierces through the prejudices which have been produced by old habits and certain forms of study. I rejoice to agree with him, and that, in consequence of the evil done by the clergy, according to his account, he has been compelled to put in its true light this truth, that the celebration of the Lord’s supper is no more a separation than preaching is. I draw the same practical (I do not say theoretical) conclusion, as the author of the report; when I find myself authorised to preach apart, I find myself authorised to communicate apart. It is, in my opinion, a perfectly just principle.

I have no doubt that the reporter has sometimes demanded other conditions for preaching than those which I myself demand. I have no wish to make him say what he does not say. I take the naked principle: and, I say, that to draw a distinction between these two things,

as has been too often done amongst us, is to go against Scripture, seeing that, if I am authorised to preach apart, I am authorised to celebrate the Lord's supper apart. Let this be noted! I admit with him, that these two steps are very serious; and I am sure that he does not wish to separate from nationalism, neither by one nor the other. I let him judge for himself if it be to separate oneself from the church. I insist only upon the point contained in this sentence: to preach the word and dispense the Lord's supper, without being authorised by the ecclesiastical governors, when they are in disorder. I add what he gives us of Benedict Pictet: "The truth of the faith, the purity of worship, submission to Christ, constitute the essence (Petre) of the church. The preservation of these things is then the preservation of the unity of the church."

We have said enough in reply to the quotation which the same reporter makes of the Epistle to the Ephesians. One minister, nominated by men, is a thing far different from the diversity of ministry found in the body of Christ; such a person, in general, extinguishes all the other gifts, unless they manifest themselves in spite of him. It is this confusion that is made between a ministry, authorised by men, and the ministry of the body of Christ, which has produced so much confusion in practice, and which, in eliminating every other ministry than that which is found in the one minister, has forced all other ministries, as it were, into a position of opposition. However irregular, the means, as they are called, have become in a measure more regular in spite of the regular means, so that we have evangelists acknowledged, who are not ministers of the gospel, even

teachers, and the Lord's supper apart, without there being separation from the church.

It is a very important thing to commit to faithful men what one has learnt; but there is always this confusion, that by ministry is meant an ecclesiastical body, ecclesiastical authorities. It is not said here that Timothy (2 Tim. 2:2) was to confer offices, but to communicate the truth; as also he was to prevent certain persons from preaching other doctrines. He was called to watch over the doctrine, and to commit it to faithful men, able to teach others also. The reporter says, that it is evident that these principles (those of the ruin of the church) are false, because "it is easy to see that the state of the churches of Rome, of Ephesus, of Galatia, of Corinth, was the same as ours." Does he think then that it was the duty of the faithful to have the Lord's supper apart, because of the condition of these churches, as he thinks that it is now his duty to have the Lord's supper apart? Was it the condition of those churches to have their pastors nominated by the civil authorities, perhaps by unbelievers? Has the domination of the Pope changed nothing in the state of the church? What does he mean by "ours"?—the church of Geneva, where he cannot take the Lord's supper?—the church of Rome, which he fights against with all his might? Where was the church among those churches mentioned in the word, however far it might have wandered in practice, or where was the doctrine which opened "the door to admit to the Lord's supper, all those who, in the church acknowledged themselves utterly lost by their works and completely saved by Jesus Christ"? I think it strange the reporter should say, that as to their actual circumstances, the

churches, in the time of the apostles, were in the same condition as his own.

The reporter, moreover, gives us a summary of the evangelical doctrines, on which, thanks be to God! we agree perfectly, as in many other matters, precious for time and eternity; then, contrasting the opposite error, he says: “Such has been in every age the language of the fallen churches and of all false religions” Such have been the doctrines of the whole professing church; it was therefore a fallen church. There were only persecuted separatists who may have kept the good deposit of faith.

The church, as a body, is in ruin. That is what I say. In what condition was Protestantism a few years ago (and even at present, in several places), as to doctrine? A scandal, even to a pious member of the Romish Church! Good has introduced itself a little; but it is in spite of the church; I appeal to the Oratoire.54 The church, yes, the church of the reporter is, according to him, in ruin; his position shews it. “Such is,” says he (in speaking of a rejected teaching, as unworthy even of the name of Socinian), “such is the doctrine which has been promulgated in Geneva for a quarter of a century, and that without any remonstrance being raised, if it be not those of men who have been publicly punished by judicial sentence. Were we not right in saying, that our circumstances were unheard of?” How unheard of, if the condition be the same as that of the church at Ephesus? “The Romish religion, even, is not so fatal to the eternal interests of humanity”; “and all that with the sanction of the authorities.” Yet persons dare to say: the condition of our church is such as that of Rome, of Ephesus, etc.! And it is not a fallen church!

I beseech my brother to believe me in this, that I am not saying here a word concerning his position; this is not the place to discuss it. I quote all these avowals, because he loudly blames this doctrine, that the church is in a state of failure, and yet it seems to me that he himself proves it. Such is all that I occupy myself with in this report. May God bless the work of those who preach the Lord Jesus! this is my prayer. The report discusses principles, I discuss them too; and I close by making this remark, that there is all possible difference between "preparing for the church faithful persons" —a task that appears to me rather a difficult one for man—and "committing to faithful men" the truths that one has learned, so that there may be a rampart against error. I would also recall the very important remark of the report on evangelisation. The word of God has settled the question. "God," says the scripture (1 Cor. 12:28), note it well; God, and not man— God "has set some in the church; first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers." Well! let it be God, and not man, who appoints them, and we shall be content.

I wish, in conclusion, to remember myself, as well as to remind those who will peruse these pages, that the Holy Spirit is ever with us—that His strength fails not. The unbelief of the mass of professors may exercise an influence on the mode of the activity of the child of God, never on its source. It may give him more of sorrow sometimes; he may find himself more isolated, but that cannot prevent his being faithful. The unbelief of the mass may doubtless change the circumstances in the midst of which he labours, and so modify their effects, but it cannot alter the faithfulness of him who labours in it; on the contrary, the moment when evil is at its height,

is ordinarily the time of the greatest faithfulness of Christians: we have already said so in the pamphlet, “On the Formation of Churches”; Elijah, Samuel, Moses, and others, are witnesses of this.

Moreover, the duty of evangelising always remains: the responsibility of those who have to labour in pastoral care is always the same, and Christian love will constrain those who are filled with the Spirit of Christ thus to occupy themselves. The conviction that the church is fallen, and that the world is going to be judged, will only serve to give more activity, so that they who have ears to hear, may hear, and be saved from the perverse generation, whose iniquity will soon bring in such terrible consequences; namely, the righteous anger of a God of patience, the wrath of the Lamb! Let us work, dearly beloved, whilst it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work. The love of Christ is the best guide for our daily duties.

## Appendix

I desire to add a few words on an objection, or rather on an aspect under which one may view a part of the reasoning of my pamphlet, in order to take away from its force. The answer to this objection is already to be found in the reasoning itself. Nevertheless, I would say a word about it. Here is the difficulty: it is admitted that God has set in the church, apostles, prophets, etc.; but it is said that it is in the body of Christ, in the church, one part of which is in heaven already, while another is in conflict, and a third part, finally, is not yet manifested; conse-consequently, it is said, one cannot speak of a unity of the church on earth.

Here is my answer:—

It cannot be denied that there has been a manifestation of that body, and of the unity of that body on earth, at the beginning of the present dispensation. Apostles and prophets did not exercise their ministry in heaven, although it was a spectacle there to angels; and the faithful who composed that unity, that body, were all on earth. This fact once admitted, the objection loses all its force; or, rather, it becomes an argument in favour of the truth on which I insist; for the blessed and powerful unity which then existed, does no longer exist. I only wish to enter upon the question, as concerning the conscience of those who now form the church of God on earth, and not with respect to the counsels of God.

If this objection be attentively considered, it will be seen that it gives greater prominence to the idea of the unity of the church, as a body on earth during this dispensation. If the unity of the church is not taken in the sense of forming a society here below, but only in the sense of the assembly of the elect, in a state of eternal salvation; then, it is evident that a considerable portion of the church was already in heaven, when the present dispensation began. This beginning has taken place, and the apostles were given, as well as the other gifts, as the result and manifestation of the glorification of Christ “on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,” Heb. 8:1.

The unity I speak of, is, therefore, a unity produced by the sending of the Holy Spirit here below, after Christ had been glorified; it only existed after the sending of the Holy Spirit, as the result of His mission. It is evidently a question of something different from the unity of all the elect in heaven; for a great portion of these elect were already saved and removed from the

earth when the unity that is spoken of began. It is therefore, a unity which belongs to the present dispensation, of which the Holy Spirit, sent from above, was to be the strength; it is a unity which should have acted on the world and consequently have been seen of the world. As the Saviour Himself said: “That they also may be one … that the world may believe,” etc. And the manifestation of the Spirit applied in effect to the welfare of the body here below. Further, that unity was visible at the beginning of the dispensation; all the manifested saints formed part of it. The joints of supply were all working in the unity of the body on earth. But, it is said, this unity of the body must necessarily have ceased, since many of those who formed part of it are gone to heaven. In speaking thus, one admits that the unity took place; for, if it has ceased, it existed once. Yes; there has been here below a manifestation of the unity of the body by the power of the Holy Spirit, carrying it out in all the joints of supply. These joints of supply did exist, and were active, and if any joint did not perform its functions aright, the Holy Spirit, by means of the apostles, applied the remedy, although Jesus was no more on earth. “What will ye,” says Paul, “shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, or in a spirit of meekness? “Thus, the glory of Christ was not in the dust here below. The church, filled with the Holy Spirit, one and united, reflected in the midst of the darkness of the night of the world the glory of that hidden Sun, of Jesus its beloved Saviour. This manifestation of the glory of Christ by the church in unity no longer exists. Is that a matter of indifference?

To me, it is a subject of tears and of deep humiliation. The glory of Christ, present, so to speak, in the church,

by the power of the Holy Spirit, shed all its light on the cross, all its brightness on sin, and on the world. The cross, which began the Christian life, closed the life and hopes of the world; but it shone with all the brightness of the glory to which it led, and which was to be its crown. These were the two terms of the Christian life. All the rest, that which lay between, was only passing. It was easy to be a stranger and a pilgrim, where the cross and the glory united to place in its true light the world which had crucified the Lord of glory; where the world was for the heart only, the empty tomb of Christ—for love, only the scene of a testimony borne to a glory and to a love, which produced the ardent desire that He might come quickly. Is it so now? Are we united as at the beginning? Does that testimony of devotedness still exist? Are the glory of Christ and His coming things so present to the church, that every sacrifice is easy to it—that the cross is light for it—that the riches of this world are only for it an opportunity given of God to bear witness to His love, only unrighteous riches, of which one frees oneself, as of a burden, in order to cast them into the treasuries of Christ, that they may come out transformed and purified in the waters of His love? Am I to be satisfied when people tell me that the unity, in the bosom of which all this did manifest itself, can no longer exist, because the first Christians, who formed part of it, are dead? Ought my heart and my conscience to content themselves with such an answer? Dear brethren, are your hearts satisfied with it? If they are, I have done reasoning. If the manifestation of the glory of Christ in us and by us on earth, in His body, which is the church, does not touch you, I have nothing more to tell you. If the heart is indifferent to all this, there is no more reasoning for the Spirit of God. But if it be only

knowledge that you lack, may God deign to bless my words for your heart!

The doctrine of the union of the church, as a body, whether at the beginning or through the whole duration of the dispensation, is closely connected with the doctrine of the presence of the Holy Spirit here below. If He unites the members which are on earth to those who have departed, is it not just as true, that, being on earth as regards the order of the dispensations, He necessarily unites into one body all the Christians who are on earth? It is perfectly certain that this it is which He did at the beginning.

The objection which we are discussing, admits this truth. If, therefore, the Holy Spirit does not now unite the children of God into one body—if that is impossible, for whatever reason it may be, it is evident that the state of things established by God on earth, as the means of manifesting His glory, and as the instrument of testimony, has ceased to exist. You may give it what name you like—failure, ruin, apostasy. It is one of the gravest facts, of the deepest import, in the kingdom and in the dispensations of God. If the Holy Spirit gives unto us to penetrate through that which envelopes the mystery of lawlessness, and if thus, before the full manifestation of the apostasy to the world, we can say, There is the apostasy,55 it seems to me that to condemn the anticipated application of this expression to those who walk in the spirit of apostasy, and who will be the apostasy when the veil is removed—it seems to me, I say, that this is less profitable and less true than to warn the church of the circumstances in which it is placed. If anyone found a plant which produced poisonous fruit, while it was not yet the season for it to bear its fruit, and

said to an ignorant person, “this plant bears poisonous fruit, pay great attention to it,” would there not be more blessing for that person than if it had been said, “see that plant, it does not bear poisonous fruit”? In the first case, the remark would perhaps have failed in exactness, and been less logical than in the second; but would it be less true, less seasonable?

In order that the force of the unity produced by the Holy Spirit may be better understood, I shall call attention to a fact. At the time of His coming, Jesus, as Son of man, was corporally here below, although, as God, He was present everywhere; all the ways of God, on earth, were connected with that great fact. And so it is also with respect to the Holy Spirit: Jesus, when He was going away, promised “another Comforter”; that promise was fulfilled not many days after, and the Holy Spirit came down on the disciples, although He was present everywhere, inasmuch as He is God. According to the dispensation of God, the Holy Spirit dwells now also personally in the church of God on earth. All the ways of God are connected with this great fact—the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church. The Spirit bears a living testimony to the glory of the Son of God, as the Son Himself glorified the Father while He abode here below.

This doctrine of the coming down of the Holy Spirit, and of His presence of earth, is evidently of the deepest import in the question of the unity of the church.

I do not quote again the passages of the Epistle to the Ephesians and of the Epistle to the Corinthians already quoted above. At the beginning, “the Lord added to the church… such as should be saved.” I shall only call attention to the expression: “And whether one member

suffer, all the members suffer with it," 1 Cor. 12:26. This expression is scarcely applicable to the members of the body of Christ who are already in heaven. Either this principle of love no longer finds its application, or the church has yet a unity on earth and must be viewed as a body which has "many members," but the members of which—of this body which is one, although they are "many" —are but "one body," 1 Cor. 12:12. But in its present state, that body is imperfect, dilapidated, ruined, if you will. To say this is only to give one proof more of the ruin I have spoken of, a proof, the force of which is, I believe, but little appreciated by those who bring it forward.

The word apostasy has frightened many persons, and it has been said that the word is not scriptural. This is a mistake. It has been used because it is the word which the apostle employs to mark what is to happen before the judgment. Martin has translated it by the word "revolt" (2 Thess. 2:3); Sacy, by the word "apostasy."56 The term "apostasy" necessarily supposes a certain body or a certain person that has been in a certain position, but who is fallen, who has failed, who has not kept his original state, etc.

The same objections might be made to the language of the Spirit of God Himself, speaking by the mouth of Jude, as are made to the use of the word "apostasy" to designate a state of things which is not yet openly manifested. "And Enoch also," says Jude, in speaking of those who had got into the church unnoticed, "prophesied of these." Man, reasoning according to his own views, might say, They are not "these" at all. According to man, he would be right. In fact, they were not these persons; but the Holy Spirit is not afraid of

saying “of these,” because, though hidden, they were of the same race. It was the same principle: they were the same men morally speaking: only the discernment of the Spirit was necessary in order to designate them. Is it wrong to speak as the Holy Spirit speaks?

I said in my first pamphlet, that the fall of man in the present dispensation was according to the analogy of all that had come to pass until now. I shall quote some of the instances to which I referred, in order that one may feel the universality of that sad proof of the folly and weakness of man, and of the power of Satan—of our enemy.

Adam soon lost his innocence. Noah got drunk in his tent, immediately after the flood. The Israelites made the golden calf, before Moses came down from the mount.

Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire, before the days of their consecration were accomplished; and Aaron did not eat of the sin-offering according to the ordinance of God.

Solomon, set up as king over Israel, in peace, according to the promises of God to David, fell into idolatry; and the kingdom was divided.

Even though the glory of Christ will have been manifested in the last days, the moment Satan is loosed, the nations will submit themselves to him, and will make war against the beloved city and the camp of the saints.

The fall of man in the present dispensation, and the ruin of the dispensation, by means of man’s unfaithfulness in keeping the deposit which was entrusted to him, is only that which is again found, in all the situations, in all the

circumstances, in all the dispensations, in which he has been placed. If this did not take place in this dispensation, it would be contrary to the analogy of all that is presented to us in the history which is given to us in the Bible, and contrary to all that is revealed to us about man in all the dispensations of God.

31 Geneva, 1841.

32 I think at bottom my idea is more exact than his.

33 This subject is to be found treated at length in the "Hopes of the Church." Prophetic Vol. 1.

34 Note to translation. In the Corinthians, all that call on the name of the Lord Jesus are added to the church of God which is at Corinth, in the address at the beginning of the epistle. Thus the local church, when really such, becomes a practical representative of the whole body—Christ being in its midst. But there is no membership of a church.

35 I am not aware that we have any example of a fallen church being restored.

36 I do not speak of the knowledge of this principle, although this knowledge be of great importance to the well-being of the church.

37 This is added in French translations—I think from Calvin down.

38 The translation of Lausanne says "designated." Why have these words been added, "by way of suffrages," in Acts 14:23, whilst here they have been omitted?

39 I will not reply to accessory arguments; I shall only insist upon what applies directly to the matter in hand. But I may say, in passing, that, if Deuteronomy 1 is

closely examined and compared with Exodus 18, it will be found that these passages state quite the contrary to the conclusion our brother desires to draw from them.

40 Note to translation.—Gifts and local offices are not here distinguished clearly; the principle only is in question.

41 This refers to Switzerland.

42 Neither the translation of Martin, nor that of Osterwald, nor yet that of Lausanne, translates Galatians 4:4 by fulness of times.

43 Note to translation.—This refers to 1 John 2:18, connected with 2 Thessalonians 2. But apostasy is used generally in the sense in which all used it and applied it to the state of the professing church under Popery. Here it is merely the argument from the passage, that the existence of saints did not prove there was no ruin, for there would be saints under Antichrist. I do not believe the apostasy or Antichrist to be yet come. This is unfolded farther on.

44 See Psalm 96, 99; Ezekial 36:9-11; 1 Corinthians 6:2; Zephaniah 3:8, 9, 19, 20. The expression “the world to come” is applicable solely to this world under a new dispensation.

45 Note to translation.—The passage does not refer to the mystery of the church at all, but to the tree of promise beginning with Abraham.

46 The expression “world to come” is not applicable to heaven.

47 Note to translation.—Strictly this is not a dispensation at all, but a heavenly calling, introduced, at

the close of the Jewish, before the world or age to come in which the promises made to them will be fulfilled.

48 For, whenever I can find a remnant according to the Spirit, I find what is essential to the dispensation, although I have not all that was possessed by those who were faithful at the beginning of the dispensation. It is the confusion of these two things which leads our brother into error. I acknowledge that which is essential to the existence of the dispensation, where there are two or three believers gathered in the name of Jesus; but I do not pretend to possess in that state what I do not actually possess, and I do not wish to fill up its place by human means. This is what nationalism and dissent have done, in order not to have the appearance of disorder in the world.

49 The word used in the French edition of Martin. In Switzerland, the dissenters from the Establishment had chosen presidents, when they had not regular pastors.

50 I see in effect that the dear brother I have in view, amiably imaginative, compares the school of theology to the twelve who were with Jesus. I had only paid attention to the passages quoted. As to this allusion, I do not occupy myself with it; I see more of the reporter than of the Report; it is unnecessary I think to argue about it. (Page 15 of the Report.)

51 Messrs, Merle, Gaussen, etc., who had separated from the Genevese establishment, or were driven out for faithfulness, when it was Socinian. At that time the Clergy were almost wholly Socinian. If my memory does not much deceive me, Mr. Merle drew up the Report.

52 The word “clergy” is derived from a word which is found in 1 Peter 5:3, signifying “lot,” or “heritage”: “Not

as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." The word translated by "heritage" is in Greek, cleron. Clergy has been made out of this, and the term is applied to the body ecclesiastic to make it the Lord's heritage and the government of the churches; whereas, there is found in the passage a warning against such conduct. The abuse began early. (See Gieseler, p. 169, vol. 1, Clark.)

53 As Tertullian, who said, "Oh, testimony of a soul naturally Christian."

54 The place established for preaching and worship at Geneva by those who had left the national body, which was Socinian, where these reports by Mr. Merle, etc., were read.

55 As Jude said, "And Enoch also… prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh… to execute judgment… and to convince all the ungodly… of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him"; although they were yet hidden in the bosom of the church, where they had got in unnoticed.

56 See also the version of Lausanne, Acts 21:21, in footnote.

# On Ministry: Its Nature, Source, Power, And Responsibility

The state of the church of God sufficiently, it seems to me, points out the usefulness of the following observations on ministry, which are not presented with a view to controversy, but to throw light on a subject on which much controversy has been expended. It is a subject, moreover, of sufficient dignity and interest to lead us above the mists of theological discussions, and into the enjoyment of the pure light of heaven, whence true ministry emanates.

It may be well as a preliminary to give its true place and proper aspect to the idea of ministry; for it appears to me, that the importance of it has scarcely been fully apprehended. Its details may be taken up afterwards.

## Comparison Between the Levitical Priesthood and the Ministry of the Gospel

The existence of ministry is consequent on the nature of the present dispensation; and, in saying this, we ascend very high to discover its source; for the nature of this dispensation is nothing less than the sovereign grace of God, the activity of His love.

The position and the character which distinguish the servants of God, are always, and necessarily, in unison with the principles of the relation which exists between God and men. When God only recognised certain families, the head of the family was its priest and prophet. We find examples of this in Abraham, Noah, and the other patriarchs. But this principle acquires a

more general and important application, when a whole dispensation is in question; as in the case of Judaism and Christianity. The ways of God, and the principles of His dealings with sinners, are here unfolded with many more details for the conscience, and more distinctness and splendour as to the accomplishment and the revelation of grace.

Observe, accordingly, the marked distinction between these two dispensations. In Judaism, under mount Sinai, where the law was given and those ordinances established which regulated the intercourse between the people and God, we have a people already formed and recognised as such before God; a people whom God had already brought to Himself (Exod. 19); whose existence and whose rights depended on their being the children of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and who, with few exceptions, were perpetuated by natural descent. In a word, they already existed as a people, when God entered into covenant relationship with them; for it pleased God to try if man, so privileged and put in possession of every possible advantage for the maintenance of his position, could stand before Him.

The work and principle of Christianity are altogether different. Christianity supposes man to be lost; it supposes that the trial, to which God has subjected him by means of the law, has only served to prove more plainly how impossible it is for man, whatever his advantages or his privileges, to stand before Him. But this having been proved, Christianity presents to us God in His grace visiting this ruined race. He beholds the Gentiles sunk in ignorance and idolatry, and degraded by the most revolting crimes; He finds the Jews still more culpable, having been unfaithful to higher

privileges; and He exhibits both Jew and Gentile as the terrible proof that human nature is fallen and corrupt, and that in the flesh good does not dwell. In Christianity God sees man wicked, miserable, rebellious, lost; but He sees him according to His infinite compassions; He only notices the wretchedness of man to bear witness to him of His own pity. He beholds and comes to call men by Jesus; that they may enjoy in Him, and through Him, deliverance and salvation, with His favour and His blessing!

The consequence of the position of the Jewish nation was very simple: a law, to direct the conduct of a people already existing as such before God; and a priesthood, to maintain the relations which existed between this people and their God— relations which were not of a character to enable them to draw nigh to Him without mediation. The question was not, how to seek and call those without; but to order the intercourse with God of a people already recognised as such.

As we have already seen, Christianity has an entirely different character. It considers mankind as universally lost, proves them in reality to be so, and seeks, through the power of a new life, worshippers in spirit and in truth. In like manner does it introduce the worshippers themselves into the presence of God, who there reveals Himself as their Father—a Father who has sought and saved them. And this is done, not by means of an intermediate priestly class who represent the worshippers because of the inability of the latter to approach a terrible and imperfectly known God; but it introduces them in full confidence to a God known and loved, because He loved them, sought, and washed them

from all their sins, that they might be before Him without fear.

The consequence of this marked difference between the relations in which Jews and Christians stand as toward God is, that the Jews had a priesthood (and not a ministry) which acted outwards, that is, outside the people; while Christianity has a ministry which finds its exercise in the active revelation of what God is—whether within the church or without—there being no intermediate priesthood between God and His people, save the Great High Priest Himself. The Christian priesthood is composed of all true Christians, who equally enjoy the right of entering into the holy places by the new and living way which has been consecrated for them—a priesthood, moreover, whose relations are essentially heavenly. Ministry, then, is essential to Christianity; which is the activity of the love of God in delivering souls from ruin and from sin, and in drawing them to Himself.

On earth, then, as regards the relations subsisting between God and man, a priesthood was the distinguishing characteristic of the Jewish dispensation; ministry, of the Christian: because priesthood maintained the Jews in their relations with God; and because by ministry Christianity seeks in this world worshippers of the Father. I say, on earth, for, in truth, when we consider the portion of the Christian in its highest point of view, namely, in that which has relation to heaven, Christianity has its “kings and priests” —that is to say, all saints. The worship of God is not ministry; it is the expression of the heart of the children before their Father in heaven, and of priests before their God; in the intimacy of the presence of Him who, in His love, has

rent the veil, which His justice had opposed to the sinner; and has rent it by a stroke which has disarmed justice, and left her nothing but the happy task of clothing with the best robe those to whom before all entrance had been denied.

To suppose, then, the necessity of a priestly order is to deny the efficacy of the work of Christ, which has procured for us the privilege of our presenting ourselves before God; it is, in fact, though not in words, to deny Christianity, in its application to the conscience, and to the justification of the sinner; it is to overthrow all those relations which God has established that He might glorify Himself and place man in peace and blessedness. On the other hand, God acting in Christianity according to the active energy of His love towards sinners, Christian ministry becomes the expression of this activity. It has its source in the power of this love; whether it be in calling souls, or in nourishing those who are called and whom Jesus loves.

It is thus presented to us by Paul, as one of those things which characterise the gospel of the grace of God.

## Source of Ministry

“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them: and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation.” These are the three things which flow from the coming of God in Christ: “reconciling,” “not imputing,” and “committing unto us the word of reconciliation.” Without this last, the work of grace would have remained imperfect in its application, for He who, in His coming here below, was reconciling and “not imputing” — this Jesus needed to be “made sin” for us, to die and go away. The work

finished, it remained thus suspended in its application; and the crowning of this glorious work of the grace of God was to commit to man “the word of reconciliation” according to His own power and good pleasure. There were thus two elements contained in ministry: first, deep conviction and powerful sense of the love displayed in this work of reconciliation that capacitated; secondly, gifts, to declare to men, according to their necessities, the riches of this grace which animated the hearts of those who bore witness of it.

This it is that is presented to us in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25). He that had five talents, as well as he who had two, was actuated by the confidence which grace gives, by the knowledge of the character of his master, and by the confidence engendered in him, both by this knowledge of his master, and by this trust which he saw was reposed in himself. Their abilities, and their gifts, were not the same. God is sovereign in this respect. He who had only one talent, according to his ability, was wanting in this confidence, which is inspired by the knowledge of God in Christ. He mistook the character of his master. He was slothful, because of the state of his soul; as the two others were diligent from the same cause.

We thus see, that the principle of ministry is the active energy of love, of grace, flowing from the faith by which we know God. To touch this is to overthrow the whole in its fundamental principle. In its essence, ministry flows from individual knowledge of the Master’s character. Grace known and strongly felt becomes active grace in our hearts—the only true, the only possible source, in the nature of things, of a ministry according to God. We see, moreover, that it is the sovereignty of God, who

gives, as He sees good, either natural capacity—as the vessel to contain the gift—or the gift, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, out of those treasures which are found in Him, and which He has received for men.

We find ministry based on the same principle, when the Lord says to Peter, “Simon Peter, lovest thou me”; and, on His reply adds, “Feed my sheep, feed my lambs.” This leads to the two essential parts of ministry, namely: first, the free activity of the love, which impels to call souls to Christ; and secondly, the service of love which is unwearied in its efforts to edify them when called. As regards the ministry of the word (for there are other gifts), these two divisions are distinctly presented to us in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians. In verse 23, Paul is “a minister of the gospel preached to every creature under heaven”; and in verse 25, a minister of the body of Christ, the church, to fulfil the word of God.

As the mainsprings and sources then of all ministry, there are these two things: the love produced in the heart by grace, the love which impels to activity; and the sovereignty of God, who communicates gifts as seems good to Him, and calls to this or that service—a call, which renders ministry a matter of faithfulness and duty, on the part of him who is called. It is to be observed, that these two principles both suppose an entire freedom from man, who cannot interfere, as either the source or the authorisation of ministry, without, on the one hand, neutralising love, as the source of activity, or, on the other, infringing on the sovereignty of God, who calls and sends, and whose call constitutes duty. Co-

operation and discipline according to the word find, withal, their own place untouched.

Whatever ministry is not founded on these two principles is really no ministry at all. There is no Christian source of activity but the love of Christ and the call of God.

## On the Power of Ministry, and on its Responsibility

Having thus briefly considered the question of the source of ministry, which connects itself with the very first principles and with the existence of Christianity, and which has its being in the activity of the love of God, let us examine the power which works in this ministry, and under what responsibility it is exercised by those to whom it is committed.

### Power of Ministry

2 Corinthians 3 indicates its general character. It is the ministry of the Spirit.

There are two grand features which characterise the work of Christ in the world. He is the Lamb of God who takes away sin, and He baptises with the Holy Ghost. I pass by the first point, however full of interest, as not belonging to our subject, save so far as it is an object about which ministry is occupied. I rest on the second of those things by which John the Baptist describes the work and the glory of Christ. “He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost”—a point which is evidently of the utmost importance, and the spring of all the power and spiritual energy which is to be found in the church. And truly, a spiritual energy is needed, that Satan may be combated with success, and that these poor bodies, the

flesh being mortified, may become the vessels of testimony and of the power of God.

This power of the Holy Ghost in man is a most important truth. Jesus Himself was anointed by the Holy Ghost and with power. “How,” said Peter to Cornelius, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him.” This was not spoken of His divinity; for He was God before the foundation of the world; nor of His perfection as man; for, as born of the Virgin Mary, His flesh was holy. He was the Son of God not only when He created the world, but also in the world, as the man born of this same Mary by the power of the Holy Ghost. He had the consciousness thereof when He answered His mother who sought Him in the temple: “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business? “Neither does it refer to His love: His mere presence in the world was love itself. But in addition to this, John the Baptist sees the Holy Ghost descending like a dove, and remaining upon Him. “God had anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power”; and then, for the first time, filled with the Holy Ghost, He begins His ministry, acts officially as Son of man in the world, and endures the temptations by which the Last Adam was to be tried, in order that He might assert His title beyond the power of Satan; while, on the contrary, the first Adam had fallen under that power. Then it is that we see Him casting out devils by the Spirit of God, and saying to His mother, “What have I to do with thee?” His whole life was the power of the Holy Ghost in ministry. By the Holy Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God. He was much more than man; and yet was He a man—this Jesus of

Nazareth, “whom God had anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power.”

Our part in all this has another and different element. In Him it was man, the Last Adam on the earth, Himself accomplishing, in the face of Satan, all that the spiritual man could offer to God in His life. His voice was not heard in the street. He must needs be perfect, and as man overcome Satan in that world in which man had failed, and in the very circumstances in which man found himself in consequence of his fall. This is what that precious Saviour has perfectly accomplished. Up to this, however, He had not become the commencement of a new order of things.

The first Adam failed in the garden of Eden, in the very place where he was surrounded by blessings. It was when driven from it, that in his fallen state he became the head of a fallen race in this world of sin and ruin. Jesus, the Last Adam, must needs first be perfect, and personally gain the victory over Satan in the midst of the ruin—a victory so complete, and so perfect, that, having bound the strong man, He could spoil his goods, and that His name, in the mouth of those whom He sent, sufficed to cast out devils. But to commence a new world of glory and of blessing, to redeem His church, and make her like unto Himself, according to the power by which He is able to subdue all things to Himself, it was necessary that He should overcome Satan in the last stronghold in which he held men captive, by the judgment and under the sentence of God Himself, that is to say, in death. It was necessary that He should undergo, to the full, the last effect of sin, as the result of the wrath of God, and of the power of Satan, as well as of the weakness of man. This He did.

Thus, the wrath of God having passed over (except as to those who reject Jesus), all the power of Satan being destroyed in the very seat of that power as regards man, death being overcome, his gates of brass burst open—Jesus, the Last Adam, Victor over Satan and death, Heir, as Son of man, and, by the righteousness of God, of all that Adam possessed, and much more than Adam lost, while, as Son of God, upholding all things by the word of His power; the image of the invisible God, and the expression of His glory—Jesus, conformably to the counsels of God concerning man, begins to act as the Head of a new world, and of a new creation. Nevertheless, although He had abolished all that was against us, although He had triumphed over Satan on the cross, and led captivity captive, the time for the deliverance of creation had not yet come. The present was only the period for the witness of the power of Jesus, in the midst of a creation still in its fallen state and from whence Satan was not yet expelled. It was the time for gathering the church of His elect out of the world, that He might nourish and cherish them, until they should be presented to Himself in glory; that is, in a word, for making this church on earth the receptacle57 of the power possessed by the Son of man at the right hand of God. He, who now filled all things, having first descended into the lower parts of the earth, and then re-ascended up far above all heavens—He had received gifts for men, Eph. 4:8-10.

The day of Pentecost was neither a moral change of the affections, nor the breath of life from the risen Jesus; all this had already taken place. The disciples were waiting at Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high. Having been endued therewith, no doubt

this acted powerfully on their affections, because it revealed Jesus with power; but the life and affections were already there, even as in a still higher sense the life and affections of the Son of God were in Jesus before the Holy Ghost descended upon Him as a dove. Jesus took His place, according to the counsels of God, with the faithful in Israel, in the baptism of John, “fulfilling all righteousness”; and was then anointed for service among them. By virtue of His death and resurrection, He placed His disciples in the same relation with God, in which He Himself stood, going to His Father and their Father, to His God and their God; and He baptised them with the Holy Ghost, as the witness of His glory in heavenly places, and the power which identified His disciples with Himself in this glory. It is very certain, from the words of Jesus Himself (Acts i), that the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and that nothing which the apostles had previously received was the fulfilment of this promise; for He says to them: “Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”

The gospel by Luke, of which the Acts of the Apostles is only a continuation (the Acts taking up the subject in almost the same words as those of this gospel), presents to us the Lord Jesus specially as Son of man, Head of a new order. That gospel presents this truth morally, the Acts in power.

The gospel by John, although touching the same subject, presents it under another form. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, Advocate or Comforter, sent by the Father in His name or by Jesus Himself from the Father. He guides into all truth, shews things to come, and gives them to know that Jesus is in the Father, the disciples in

Jesus, and He in them. If I were considering the subject of the Holy Spirit, I should have to speak of the close of this gospel, where He is seen as the Spirit of. truth in the midst of the church, witnessing against the world by His presence, and guiding believers into all truth. It would be necessary to consider all those passages where He is presented to us as the seal of redemption, the earnest of the inheritance, and the Spirit of adoption, such as 2 Corinthians 1; Ephesians 1; Galatians 4; Romans 8, and many others. But I am reminded that, if the thought of the presence of the Holy Spirit, that mighty Comforter, draws the heart in that direction, our subject is ministry—a subject which is sufficiently important to glorify the Spirit.

To return to our subject. It is because of the relation which exists between the exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God, and the mission of the Holy Ghost, of which we have just spoken, that we find in John that the Holy Spirit “was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified”; for the presence of the Holy Spirit here below was the consequence of the glorifying of Him who here below had accomplished all the work of God, and fills all things.

And here we may remark, in connection with the point which has been occupying us, the progress of ideas presented to us in chapters 3, 4, and 7 of John. In chapter 3 the Holy Spirit is seen as quickening; in chapter 4 He is the power of communion—of true communion; in chapter 7, the Son of man, not being able as yet to shew Himself to the world, declares, that rivers of living waters shall flow from the bellies of those who should believe; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified; and it was then that He (the Spirit)

was to become the witness of the glory of the Son of man, and to bear testimony on earth to this glory.

What a source of ministry is now opened to us! The love of God in Christ towards poor sinners, but this love, fulfilled58 in the glory which was consequent upon the death of the Son of man, who had descended into the lowest depths of man's misery, had there glorified God, and was now Himself glorified as man. In what a position is ministry thus placed! What a glorious function; and how does man sink into nothing before it! It is, indeed, the ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness; for, if the love of God be the source and the subject of it, the righteousness of God accomplished in the glorifying of the Son of man who had glorified Him upon earth, and who had more than re-established all that glory of God (which was falsified, and, in appearance, belied by the victory of Satan, and the ruin introduced into God's creation), this righteousness becomes also its foundation. And because of this glorification of Christ in power, there were also healings and miracles attached to this ministry—at least, it is one reason for them,59 for miracles were likewise a confirmation of the most important part of it, namely, the life-giving word.

But they were also a testimony to the victory of the Son of man over Satan, and to His right of blessing over creation, notwithstanding all the evil which is there discovered. A time was to come when all this evil would be removed; but that period was not yet arrived. Nevertheless, He, who was to accomplish it, was exalted, and was manifesting, in the midst of the evil, this power in man. Thus, the prince of this world, he who was the mover of all the evil which is found therein,

was shewn to be judged; and this is why miracles were also called the powers or miracles of the world to come (Heb. 6:5); because then all this evil will be subjugated and arrested by the presence of the Son of man; and the miracles were a sample of this blessed result, a sample wrought by the Holy Spirit come down from on high. In this respect, it is indeed but a poor exhibition of the glory of the Son of man that we present before the world. May we, at least, have the wisdom to acknowledge and confess it.

But these things were, it is true, only accessory. The principal thing was the testimony borne to the love of God, to the victory of the second Adam, and to the work which He had accomplished as man—a testimony borne by the word, by that word which had created, which sustains, which quickens unto eternal life, which nourishes the renewed soul, and which reveals all the glory of God—the word, of which Jesus is the living fulness.

Considered as ministry of the word, the ministry which manifested the presence of the Holy Spirit, manifested at the same time the sovereignty of God, the miraculous power of Him who was sent, and the extent and activity of grace.

This ministry was carried on, whether among the Jews, or, as in the case of Cornelius, among the Gentiles, by the gift of tongues: Galileans, Romans, speak all kinds of languages. Man becomes only an instrument in the hand of God—of the Holy Ghost sent down from on high. He it is who guides, rules, and acts: but He does this in order to convey the testimony of the glory of the Son of man to all men; and in order, while speaking to them of the

wonderful works of God in the languages in which they were born, to draw their hearts by a grace which had come even unto them, towards the power there manifested; and, at the same time, to assert the rights of the last Adam in grace over all men. This, while commencing with the Jews, evidently addressed itself to the entire economy of the Gentiles. The judgment of God had separated the nations by confounding their languages, so that they were reckoned by languages, families, and nations (Gen. 10 and 11); and in thus separating them, He had established the bounds of the people, according to the number of the children of Israel, Deut. 32:8. The time for putting an end to all this had not yet arrived; but grace is brought in, and takes the rule, in this state of things, among the Jews, who were, after all, the most wicked of all the nations. A testimony appears, which uses the very fruit of sin to shew that grace was reaching men just where the judgment of that sin had placed them. The Holy Ghost enables Jews to speak all the languages, by which men and the hearts of men were divided in consequence of the judgment of God against the pride of the renewed earth.

The subject of this ministry, although the circumstances which accompanied its exercise might manifest to an instructed eye the sovereignty of God, the rights of the Son of man over the nations, as well as His grace towards the Jews who had rejected Him—the subject of this ministry was, at the commencement, solely the glory of the man Jesus raised from the dead—a glory, which was to be the centre and rallying-point of souls saved by the operation of grace, and formed into the

body, the church—a church which thenceforward was to be instructed and governed by this same Spirit.

Jerusalem, which had been for so long a time the beloved city, not having submitted itself to this testimony to the glory of Christ, lost the glory of being any longer the centre and fruitful source of evangelical administration. Her citizens had sent a message after the King who had gone to receive His kingdom, saying, that they would not have Him to reign over them. And, upon the death of Stephen, the whole church is dispersed, “except the apostles.” Thereupon, God, who ever finds in evil the opportunity of displaying some grace more glorious than that which has been defaced, raises up, independently of the work at Jerusalem, an apostle born out of due time, who was neither “of man nor by man”; and reveals, at the same time, this unspeakably precious truth, of which this apostle, thus called, becomes the great witness, that the church is one with Christ glorified in heaven—that she is His body, which He nourisheth and cherisheth as His own flesh. Thus disappeared that which Peter had announced to the Jews, namely, that Christ would return to them in grace, as to a people subsisting before Him. And thenceforward, we have to do with the hopes which are identified with Christ in the heavens, with the marriage supper of the Lamb, with the union of the Bride and Bridegroom in heaven. The return of Christ here below is entirely in judgment—although for the deliverance of a remnant. This is a point of progress in the ministry and administration of the church, of which the results are very perceptible to us.

Consequent upon the full revelation of the union of Christ and the church, we find, in the writings of the

apostle Paul, a much greater development of those gifts of the Holy Spirit— in connection with the position of him who, as a member of “the body of Christ,” might possess this or that gift. The same principles, however, are found practically set forth in the writings of Peter.

## On Election and on Gifts, as the Power of Ministry

We have already seen, and we have a very striking example of it in Paul, that the sovereignty of God is exhibited in ministry as in salvation. “Ye have not chosen me,” saith the Lord, “but I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.” “He is a chosen vessel unto me,” said the Lord to Ananias, “to bear my name before the Gentiles.” So that, as this sovereignty of God excludes the choice of man, anyone who denies the existence of a ministry having diversity of gifts, is opposing this sovereignty. But here, on examining the word, we shall find this sovereignty exercised by the Holy Ghost in the midst of the church: we shall likewise find that it is Christ who gives, and that it is God who works, all in all. The first point on which the apostle insists, touching his ministry, as the consequence of his remarkable position, is, that it is neither of man, nor by the medium of man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father.

The objection was often made, that he was not of the twelve; that he was not a regularly-appointed apostle. This subject we find frequently discussed in the Epistles to the Corinthians and to the Galatians. The apostle takes pains to assure them, that his ministry was independent of man; that he had not consulted flesh and

blood, but had preached Christ so soon as God had revealed Him to him for this purpose. He founds his authority upon the proofs of spiritual power which he had given. Afterwards he confers with the other apostles: he communicates to them his gospel; but he receives nothing. God takes care that unity should exist between Antioch, at that time the centre of Gentile evangelisation, and Jerusalem, originally, we may say, the only seat of the church. We see a co-operation,60 according to existing necessities: Barnabas seeks Paul, who had retired to Tarsus; and Silas determines to remain at Antioch, finding a work to accomplish there. Paul, afterwards, associates with himself other labourers, and desires Apollos to go to Corinth: Apollos refuses. But, in all these varied circumstances, Paul most positively repudiates all the pretensions of that Judaism which required (at the same time that it put forth other principles of Judaism, and in order the more easily to give currency to them) a mission from man to authorise his ministry. In truth, it was neither the wisdom, nor the arrangement of man, which carried the gospel beyond Jerusalem: it was the dispersion of the whole church— the apostles only excepted. All those that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word; the hand of the Lord was with them; and many believed. Their mission was that which persecution and their own zeal conferred on them.

In truth, the church cannot be a source of ministry; for this expression of the power of the Holy Spirit, which ministry is, necessarily precedes in many things the existence of the church: the church is created, called, and formed by means of it. Apostolic ministry, or at least that of the evangelist, precedes necessarily, by the very

nature of the case, the existence of the church (although after the church is once formed, its members may become evangelists): and the mission of these apostles, or evangelists, must be directly from Christ, and from the Holy Spirit; otherwise it is absolutely null. The twelve apostles had been sent forth by Christ during His life, although they were specially gifted after His resurrection. Paul, as regards his call, received his mission from Christ in glory, having seen that Just One, and heard the voice of His mouth: as to his separation to a special work, he had received the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit at Antioch. They went out sometimes from the bosom of a church, as Paul from Antioch: they might report to the church with joy, what God had wrought by them; but they held their office from God and from Jesus Christ: it was in the name and by the authority of God and of the Lord Jesus that they acted, and they recognised none other. They could not “please men” and be the “servants of Jesus Christ.” Paul did not scruple to say it was a small thing for them to be judged at man’s tribunal: He who judged them was the Lord. The Pharisees, it is true, called in question the conduct of Peter in the case of Cornelius; but the God of all grace had not waited for their decision! The presence of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles had justified the fruits of grace and obedience in the accused apostle, and stopped the mouths of those who complained of the extent and power of this grace.

I see two things in the exercise of this ministry, in the body of the church: the whole body, of which Christ, the glorified Man, is the Chief and Head; and hence the position of this body as on God’s part, in the world, there to represent the glory of its Head; and this body,

considered as the body of Christ Himself, the beloved object of His affections, the bride whom He has loved, for whom He gave Himself, and whom He nourishes as His own flesh: the church as the instrument of the glory and power of God in the world; and the church as the beloved object of the affections of Christ.

The gifts bear the characters, as it seems to me, of these two relations. The first of these positions is much more general, and, at the same time, has to do more with the responsibility of the church: in the second is involved, that which Christ does, and, as to the substance of it, can never fail to do, for His church—His bride. In both, the oneness of the body united to Christ is continually kept in view. In the one, we have the Lord Jesus, the Head, in heaven, but who nourishes His body till all come to His perfect stature. In the former, although personally Jesus is necessarily excluded from the ministry, He and the church are, nevertheless, seen as a whole, wherein God is acting before the world, in His name, as it is said (1 Cor. 12:12) “so also is Christ.” Accordingly, in this case (see the same chapter), the spiritual power of Christianity is contrasted with idolatry. We have that which distinguishes the Holy Spirit from demons (for the question was concerning spiritual power); the Holy Spirit alone said “Lord Jesus”; and, on the contrary, no one, speaking by the Holy Spirit, said, or could say, “let Jesus be Anathema.” There were diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; divers services, but the same Lord; divers operations, but the same God wrought all in all. Thus the Spirit, the Lord and God, are brought forward in connection with the gifts; and it is added, in order that we may see the immediate source of these things in the church, that one

and the self-same Spirit divideth to every man severally as He will.

The power of the gift came from the Holy Spirit (comparing verses 6 and 11 we learn the divinity of the Holy Spirit); but inasmuch as the Spirit acted in each with a view to the glory of the Son, as the Son had with a view to the glory of the Father, each became, by his gift, the servant of Christ, as Christ Himself had become a servant in His ministry. The Holy Spirit acts in sovereignty, but ever in the accomplishment of the counsels of God (even as the Son quickeneth whom He will, John 5:21); and, being a witness of the glory of Jesus—Son of man, and Lord—each one of those in whom He acts becomes the obedient instrument of this Lord. Such operations are not, however, secondary, nor of any subordinate spirit, nor of any angel; they are the operations of God Himself, and the servants have to do with Him. Thus the apostle, who was gifted for his apostleship by the Holy Spirit, calls himself an apostle, not of man, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father. He also calls himself the apostle of Jesus Christ, the servant of God, and, speaking generally, "by the will of God."

In the list which is given to us in 1 Corinthians 12, we have, in general, all the gifts which are, for the establishment of Christianity, signs to the world, and proofs of the glory of the victory of Christ as man, and of His rights of government in the church. Evangelists and pastors—that which is now called ministry—are not found there at all. It is rather the aggregate of divine operation and capacity in the body, than the care which Christ takes of the body as being His. Thus, except the gift of teacher, which is connected with that of pastor, all

the gifts found here are now lost—at least in their primitive form and character. I speak only of the fact, and leave to others the task of explaining why this has come to pass, and how far it may or ought to be justified. This is a very solemn subject for those who value the glory of Christ, and of His Church, and who recognise the power of the Holy Spirit.

All these things, although, in a certain sense, they might constitute a testimony of the love of God, might be exercised without love; the question was more properly of power. Accordingly, the apostle here shews us a more excellent way. Love or edification ought to have directed the exercise of these things, and at Corinth this was not the case then: discipline was needed, as the apostle teaches us in these chapters. The gifts, in themselves, were rather the expression of power; for this reason, the Spirit, as exercising the authority of Christ in the church, regulates and controls the exercise of the gifts which He has entrusted to this or that individual; and even represses their exercise when they are not used in love, for the edification of the body. This is what we find in the Epistle to the Corinthians.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, it is not so much God operating in the body as a whole, and employing its members for His service to manifest His power, as Christ, who had descended into the lower parts of the earth, and then ascended, that He might fill all things, having led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, by which He forms and nourishes His body on the earth in order to present it to Himself perfect at the end. Thus its unity, although essentially the same, is here seen as the result of grace, which calls those who are afar off and those who are nigh, that God may make them His

habitation through the Spirit. It is a unity of relation and blessing: one body, one Spirit, one God and Father of all, etc.; while, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, the attention of those Christians is directed to their condition in contrast with their state when in idolatry, where there were many gods and many lords, and, in reality, many demons. It was now one Spirit who did all; one Lord; and one God who wrought all in all; and not dumb idols.

The Epistle to the Ephesians gives us specially the privileges of the church united to Christ. God is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and also the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the end of chapter I he prays for the blessings flowing from the title of God of Jesus Christ, namely, the understanding of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints, and of the power which has set us there with Christ as it has set our Head Himself there. In chapter 3, having developed the "mystery "which had been confided to him, namely, the union of the Jews and Gentiles in one body in Christ to be the habitation of God through the Spirit, being saved and washed by Christ, and united to Him in glory, he seeks the blessings flowing from the title of Father of Jesus Christ, namely, the knowledge of the love of Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost, strengthening the inner man, to render him capable of enjoying these things, to the end he might be "filled with all the fulness of God." Behold the boundless and fruitful sources of blessing to the church, and that to the glory of Him, who worketh in us, in the church throughout all ages, world without end. But until we are perfected, those blessings are accomplished by the Holy Spirit acting in us, in the oneness of the body, according as Christ hath received

for the members of this body. He, having fulfilled all things, ascended up on high, and received gifts for men; and He has given some apostles, some prophets. We see that the gifts, presented here as the fruits of the ascension of Christ, are not power acting in the body within, and acting without to manifest the glory of God; but they are that which served to establish and edify the church, as the “habitation of God” and the object of the love of Christ, in order that all may come to the measure of His stature.

Lowliness, love, the bond of peace, are first presented as the walk worthy of our vocation to be the habitation of God in unity. Then follow the individual gifts: “to every one is given,” according to the measure of the gift of Christ, the exalted Head of this body.

These gifts are, properly, that which is called ministry. The apostle does not here speak of miracles, of healings, or of tongues: these things, the signs of power in the face of the world, were not the direct channels of His love to the church. Every gift is a ministry: for, as there are diversities of gifts, yet but one Spirit, so there are divers ministries, but one Lord. By the possession of a gift I become the servant of Christ, from whom I hold the gift by the Spirit, and whom the Spirit reveals as Lord. Hence every gift in exercise is a ministry— service discharged under responsibility to Christ; but the gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4 are more especially gifts of ministry, of service rendered to Christ in His body, “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” It was a work and not merely signs of power.

We have here enumerated apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The first two, in the exercise of their highest functions, have laid the foundation of the church, either by revelation, or by the authority of Christ, which was committed to them; for it is by this last that the apostles were distinguished from prophets. A prophet revealed the mind of God, and his work was, in this respect, finished. An apostle was sent direct, as an architect, authorised by Christ to build His church. They ordained, put in execution, took the oversight, governed, established authorities in the churches, and took cognisance, as having authority, of everything that went on in them, in order to regulate it; in a word, they were authorised, on the part of Christ, to found and to build, and to establish rules in His church. In this sense there are no longer apostles. Paul knew that after his departure grievous wolves would come in. Peter takes care, by his epistle, to remind them of what he had said to them. But it appears to me, that, in a lower sense, there may be apostles and prophets in all ages. Barnabas is termed an apostle. Junius and Andronicus are called apostles, and it is said of them that they were “of note amongst the apostles” (Rom. 16:7, 8): so that there were others who were not named.

As regards the revelation of God, it is complete; as regards any authority to found the church, it no longer exists: neither the twelve nor Paul have had any successors. The foundation cannot be twice laid; but one may act under an extraordinary responsibility as sent by God, and by a faith which depends upon communications made only to him who enjoys them (although there can be no new truth, which would not be found in the word)—a line of conduct which is only

vindicated in the eyes of others, by its resulting in blessing to the children of God. This may still exist. We may cite as examples, without pretending to justify all that they did, a Luther, a Calvin, a Zwingli, and perhaps others. So for prophets; although there be no new revelations of truth, there may be, as proceeding from God Himself, a power of applying to the circumstances of the church, or of the world, truths hidden in the word; such as, in practice, might render the ministry prophetic. Moreover, all those who expressed the mind of God “to edification” were called prophets, or, at least, prophesied. But the apostles never speak as if the church would last long; or, as if the faithful would have to wait long for the coming of Christ.

Teachers and pastors, to guide and to instruct the flock, are, in this epistle, joined in one gift (for the Holy Spirit is speaking of edification), although the gift of teacher is mentioned separately elsewhere. It is by these gifts that Christ nourishes, cares for, and strengthens the sheep, as it is by evangelists that He calls and brings them to Himself. The distinction between teacher and pastor is easily perceived, although connected together; for the one is occupied about the doctrine, the other about the sheep—an obvious distinction, but a very important one; because there is an affectionate interest in the progress of the sheep, an exercise of heart, in the gift of pastor, a care for the sheep, which is not necessarily presupposed for the simple act of teaching. It is thus that this gift of pastor gives occasion to the most tender affections, and to the strongest ties, as did also the gift of an apostle, and as does the gift of the evangelist with regard to those who have been converted through his testimony.

I notice here, that the apostle does not speak of the gifts, but of the persons who possessed them. “He gave some pastors and teachers.” The gift, without doubt, was in the vessel. But God had attached it to the person, and this person, known by his gift, was given to the church. We cannot be united to a gift, but to a person. God has given not a mere apostolate, but an apostle.

It is certainly conceivable, that he who possesses the gift may be unfaithful, and even that the gift itself may be withdrawn, or at least, that it may not be in exercise. But, generally, we have to do with a person having a certain function permanently committed to him; we have to do with a joint in the body, and that joint is always that joint.

## Responsibility of Ministry

Furthermore, the exercise of gift, although subject to the directions of the word, is in nowise dependent on the will of the body, but on that of the Head. He has given, He has placed in the body such or such a joint; and they are responsible to the Head for the fulfilment of their functions. The wisdom of the Head is disputed, if the employment of the gift be gainsayed. This responsibility is to be exercised in love and for edification—not otherwise: but responsibility to Christ cannot be set aside; nor may we touch Christ’s claims upon the service of His servant.

The circumstances of the church may occasion difficulties in this matter; but humility and faithfulness to the Lord will always know what to do. Love and obedience always find the path. The Spirit will ever be with him who obeys Christ in love. This responsibility of the individual to Christ is of the utmost importance—as

important, in its place, as regards service flowing from gift, as it is when the question is one of moral conduct. Whatever affects this, affects the rights of Christ and the responsibility from which none can be exempt. We sometimes see both destroyed by the spirit of corrupted Christianity, and men exempted from their individual responsibility in matters of moral duty, just as in their responsibility to Christ in the exercise of their gift: God, however, never forgoes His claims upon them. To hinder this service, does not hinder heretics or false teachers. The flesh in the most true Christian must be everywhere kept down; and it needs to be so in the use or abuse of gifts real or supposed, as in other things. The flesh is never a gift of God. I cannot think, that to strengthen the sense of individual responsibility is to open a door to the flesh.

These gifts placed in the church as a whole, in the body of Christ, become joints and bands; and it is in the church, in the body, that they are placed. A gift is a gift in the body and for the whole body, as a member of the human body acts for the whole. My eye sees for my whole body; my foot steps for the whole body. To give them a charge over that which is not the body, is to dislocate them. They may, indeed, be exercised in a given locality, but as the expression of the grace and of the claims of Christ; and this grace and these claims of Christ extend to all the body. Let us remember, that they are never to be used by the will of man: where that will comes in, sin enters. This may happen, as may any other sin; but, as in the case of any other sin, it becomes the subject of discipline. We see this in the abuse of the gift of tongues at Corinth. On the other hand, the narrow spirit of man is often corrected by the inalienable and

universal rights of the Spirit of God, supreme and one in all the body. No human arrangement can supersede His claims; but He, as we have seen, has the right to direct the exercise of each individual gift. He it is who exercises the government of God in the church. It is good to remember, let us add, that the gifts are not necessarily exercised in an assembly. Placed in the body, it is in the body they are exercised, though it may be often, doubtless, in an assembly; but they are also exercised on other occasions.

There are other very precious practical passages, besides the two we have been considering, which take up the subject of ministry in its highest connection with the glory of Christ and of God: we desire not to omit them. The first of these passages, Romans 12, enjoins particularly the modesty which leads the servant of God to confine himself to the assiduous and faithful employment of the gift committed to him. The second requires that if any man speak, he should speak as from God, in order that God may be glorified.

Let each one, says the apostle, think soberly of himself (how truly gracious and good, how encouraging to the heart, and, at the same time, how wholesome is the word of God!): let him “think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith… Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation.” Hence we may also remark, that we find not only special gifts as joints in the body; but, generally, the humble and faithful use of the talent confided to the servant—a talent with which he trades,

according to his responsibility towards the Master, from whom he had received it.

In 1 Peter 4:10, there is the same responsibility operating in love towards others. “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.” I know that many fear such a principle; but that does not change the truth. If any one does not speak to me as announcing the truth of God, I do not know why he speaks to me at all. Moreover, this is what the apostle says; not according to the word of God, as some translate, but “as the oracles,” as announcing the word, of God. This is what every man does who preaches the gospel: he has no doubt of the certainty of what he says. If one has not this assurance, he ought not to teach. The pretension to infallibility is one thing: quite another is the certainty that we possess God’s mind, and that on such or such an occasion, we give it out from Him and according to His will.

This responsibility would often prevent a man from speaking, when he is not taught of God: and if, as among the Bereans, even what an apostle says is judged by the word, there is no danger. It is not a question of new revelations, nor that the things spoken should be received without examination; but that the speaker should have the assurance that he is giving utterance to the mind of God, and not merely to his own thoughts. If anyone undertakes to teach me, and I ask, Are you sure that this comes from God, that it is the truth of God, and that God would have you to teach it to me? and he answers me that he is not sure of it, what confidence can I have in him? Even supposing that he replies he is sure,

I have still to examine it by the word. The more we place him who teaches under such a responsibility, the more solemnity and sobriety will there be in his teaching; and where there is love, and real gift, he will not shrink from this responsibility. If he does, let him reflect upon the parable of the servant who buried his talent: if he has not sufficient love to trade, because of the responsibility, he is exactly in the position of this wicked servant; he is not acting according to grace. We are thus reminded of this great principle: direct responsibility to Christ, by whom the talent has been entrusted to us—a responsibility from which no earthly relationship can disengage us. The claims of Christ, and His judgment, are ever there.

Responsibility, power, liberty, according to the Spirit, and the restraint of the flesh, these are the great principles of the Christian walk in this matter—a walk of which love will ever be the spring, the moving principle, and the aim. A service which is rendered to Christ, as wholly above man, without which responsibility to Christ would be made void, it acts in the unity of the whole body: otherwise the unity of the one Spirit is denied. Such is the order that the Spirit alone can produce, because He alone can put man out of sight, and subject his will by communicating a liberty, which is not the liberty of self, but of the Spirit of God—a liberty which ever recognises with joy, and as its blessedness, the authority of the Lord and entire submission to His will—a liberty which exists only to serve Him, and considers independence as the miserable pride of sin.

He who speaks of the rights of man, whether of an individual or of mankind, only speaks of sin. He who does not acknowledge the rights of the Holy Spirit,

resists the sovereignty of God, who, by means of these gifts, exalts on this earth that same Jesus who once visited it in humiliation. The church, the dwelling place of the Holy Ghost Himself upon earth— this is the grand truth of ministry, and of the glory of Christ, and of His service upon this earth. The presence of God gives joy, liberty, responsibility, and solemnity. Man, in the presence of God, is set aside, as to his vanity and pride, and strengthened in his service and fidelity.

## Conclusion

Such is the source of power, and order of ministry, as set before us in the word of God.

Essential to Christianity, because Christianity in accordance with the active energy of the love of God seeks that which was lost, testifying to the work and to the victory of Jesus by which the lost may be saved, this ministry of Jesus, who alone is worthy to be thus glorified, receives all its power, and has its only source, in the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. It is the ministry of the Holy Ghost, in the choice and employment of His servants. In all this God is sovereign. The exercise of the gifts bestowed by Him is regulated by the Holy Spirit, who acts sovereignly in the church. The proofs and examples of this are found in the word. As a source of ministry, or as authority for its exercise, man interferes only to sin.

It will be seen, that I have not touched the question of local charges, as not exactly entering into my present subject. It is evident, that the apostle Paul, and those delegated by him, established, according to his direction, several elders in the churches which he had gathered; and that servants or deacons of the

assemblies, and even deaconesses, had been, at least in certain cases, appointed for the temporal affairs and necessities which were ministered to by the charity of those female servants. Peter speaks of elders much more vaguely. There is no proof that elders were appointed among the Hebrew converts. It would rather appear, that men of gravity and of character acted among them upon their own responsibility—a responsibility laid upon them in this matter by love. In the Epistle to the Corinthians, where details of discipline are given, there is no mention made of elders. The Holy Spirit has perhaps permitted this in order that we might have these things directly from the hand of the apostle. It is only, I believe, in the Epistle to the Philippians that we have the expression “with the bishops and deacons.”

The ruin in which the church is found at the present day acts more directly upon the apparent order in this respect, than upon ministry itself, because, in this matter, man can more easily come in with exterior arrangements. But we must not confound gifts, and the service flowing from such gifts, with charges. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is sufficient for this, as for every other need of the church, provided she take the position in which the Holy Spirit sees her. Love will then suffice for all that God requires, and will make the best improvement of the means of blessing bestowed by Him; and He ever bestows that which is suited to His own glory, and to the real welfare of His believing people.

I see no more real difficulty, as regards authority, than as regards the ministry of the word; because authority in the church is not a place with certain powers limited by a written law; nor something confided by men jealous lest the authority they have given should be overstepped

through the lust of power, or the ambition of the person to whom it has been entrusted. Authority in the church is always, like the ministry of the word, the power of the Holy Spirit on the conscience; which moreover will not be found wanting. Where it exists, God will enforce, even by chastisements, the authority of His Spirit which He has lodged in a man, if that authority be despised. The discipline of the church also confirms it in certain cases; examples of this may be seen in the Epistle to the Corinthians. If we do but believe in the presence of God in the church, we cannot doubt that He is able to compel respect to Himself, and that in the authority which He has entrusted, to whomsoever it may have been given.

As to the spirit in which this ministry should be exercised, I say nothing; for it does not become me to speak of it. An entire self-renunciation (and that goes very far when we know the subtlety of the heart) is the only means of walking with the full blessing which belongs to this happy position of service to God, our brethren, and mankind. We must always remember, that is, by the power of God, we are free from all men, and responsible to God alone for the employment of the gift which He has confided to us, it is in order that we may be the servants of all. Let us remember that no one is able to give liberty to himself; and if the love of God has given us liberty, it is in order that, by this love in us, we may serve one another. He has made us free from self, free from independence, free from our own wills, to act as God acts, as He has acted in Christ— not to please ourselves, but to serve one another in love.

There is nothing more blessed in this world61 than ministry in this kind. We shall quickly find how much faith is needed in order thereto, and how much of that

holiness which keeps us near to God that we may draw strength from Him. May God teach us to keep near to Him every moment, that we may not in detail be following our own wills, even although on the whole we may be seeking to do His.

I would here remark, that grace is required in these days to realise at the same time the two principles of brotherhood and the exercise of gifts; because the latter necessarily gives externally an appearance of superiority. The flesh, it is true, may use these gifts to seek an earthly superiority, instead of the love and service of others. The humility which seeks only the good of all, makes everything easy. In worship there is an entire equality of position. More holiness may give a nearness to God in which the worship will be more true, and will be a juster expression, and at the same time nearer to God, of the wants of the assembly. The Spirit of God will then act more immediately, and will produce a more intelligent development of the links of souls with God; so that there may be in this a difference of capacity. What we have to seek is spirituality; this is the principal thing. The priest was in a higher place than the Levite; and all the priests were one, save the high priest: this is our position as worshippers. There was another position, which was very blessed, and where God, as sovereign, assigned the occupation. This was the position of the Levite. The glory of the Levite was to do that which God gave him to do. A Merarite was not to touch the vessels of the sanctuary, nor a Kohathite the different parts of the tabernacle. The Gershonites and the Merarites had a more extensive charge—more oxen and chariots; but they were not entrusted with such precious things as the Kohathites.

It is thus that the apostle reasons in reference to gifts, comparing them to the members of the body. All the services, all the gifts, are inferior to worship. In the distribution of gifts God is sovereign, and puts more external honour upon that which is least honourable. The gifts, which are not set off with so many external adornings, are sometimes the most precious. If we are in a low state spiritually, we shall look at the outward appearance, and thus at those gifts which are more external. The Gershonites and Merarites will have more importance in our eyes, with their oxen and their chariots. Nearer to the sanctuary we shall discern that the Kohathites, who carry the vessels on their shoulders, are as much or even more honoured than the others. At all events, each will be esteemed happy, in proportion as he shall have accomplished the task that God has given him to do. In Ephesians 4 we see, in the first place, that which is common to all: that which is special to each comes after; and these latter things are only to accomplish the former. Let not brotherhood displace gifts, but let gifts subserve brotherhood. The sense of the presence of God will keep everything in its place.

The same Lord has said, “all ye are brethren”; and, “strengthen thy brethren.” In order truly to strengthen them some painful experience of self will always be necessary, as in the case of Peter. It is not thus that man would have appointed, but God has so ordered. To deny the Saviour, with whom he had companied three or four years—to destroy, if he had been able, His name from the face of the earth—such, as regards our importance, is the preparation through which God causes one to pass, when He is pleased to put him forward in His service; perhaps, in addition to this, a thorn in the flesh,

because the other is insufficient. For what are we, and who is sufficient for these things?

May God Himself direct His church according to her need, according to the love and the riches of grace which are in Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in her.

57 Christ, having won the victory over Satan, and redeemed the church, could associate this church with Himself seated in the heavenly places, and make it the vessel for the manifestation of the power which conquered Satan, though Satan was not yet driven out. This is what the church ought to have been practically; it is what she was at the beginning.

58 See 1 John 4:9 and 17, margin.

59 But here also, they were, generally manifestations of that gracious power, which, by providing a remedy for those evils perceptible to the natural faculties, drew attention to that which in the power of the resurrection of Jesus (the great miracle of divine interference in human misery), provided a remedy for sin—the root of the evil. I say generally, for we have examples of the judgments of the Holy Ghost within the church, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira; and upon apostate Judaism, as in the case of Elymas the sorcerer.

60 The special work of Peter, and of Paul, was also mutually recognised; the one being, according to the will of God, the apostle of the circumcision, the other of the uncircumcision. It is to be remarked here, that the general mission of the apostles to the nations (Matt. 28) is not even noticed in this arrangement.

61 We do not speak here of communion with God, but of the various positions in wh’ch man may be found.

## Remarks On The State Of The Church

In Answer To The Pamphlet Of Mr. Rochat,

Entitled, “A Thread To Help The Simple To Find Their Way”62 This work was given to the press at the end of October, 1842; but its publication was delayed by certain causes, independent of the author’s will. Had it merely been an answer to Mr. Rochat’s “Thread,” etc., I should have hesitated to publish it after so long a delay; but I think it contains principles of sufficient importance to call for its publication, notwithstanding this delay.

In the interval, I received a circular of the Evangelical Society of Geneva,63 which accuses us of holding a system according to which “there are no longer either church, or pastors, or teachers,” etc. All I have to answer to this is, that such are not my principles, nor those of the brethren who share my convictions, as anyone may ascertain by reading what has been published up to this day.

The author of this assertion having had the kindness to shew to a brother that which concerned us in the discourse, “Geneva and Oxford,” then in the press (see p. 6), was fully informed that what he said was in nowise in accordance with the principles and views of the brethren. After all, the brethren of the Evangelical Society are now compelled by subsequent events to “play the part of Cassandra.”64 They ought not to complain if a brother, resting upon the word of God, warns his brethren of the difficult times in which we are living. Better would it be for them to humble themselves, than to blame those who, in love, have done what they are, after all, compelled to do themselves.

One of our brethren has desired me to add here a parallel between the way in which the school of theology at Geneva speaks about pastors and teachers, and the writings of brethren which are attacked. I give a quotation from a well-known paper, entitled, “A few words on the views of brethren in Christ, who meet for worship simply as brethren”: “It is not that we deny Christian ministry, as it is called; on the contrary, we receive it thankfully from the Lord, and in the widest sense of the expression, whether this ministry manifests itself in the way of government or pastoral care, or presents itself under the character of teaching, exhortation, preaching, or any other service towards the saints, etc.; Acts 20:28; Rom. 12:7, 8; Eph. 4:12; 2 Cor. 8:4; Matt. 10:42.”

We may add the following extract from “Some further developments on the formation of churches”: “Let no one mistake me; I love order with all my heart—the true order which befits the house and ordinances of God. Setting aside circumstances, every brother has the same capacity to break the bread. Nature, as well as the word, teaches us that young men, that new converts, are little fitted to take the lead in any way, and that elders, if God has raised up any, have their own proper place in the house of God.” I here repeat, with all my heart, what I said in the little tract, “On the formation of churches”: that is, “That with earnest and continual supplication I do pray, that God may raise up pastors and teachers according to His own heart, for the wants of His own dear sheep, in order that the church of God may be preserved, cared for, instructed, rendered capable of resisting the snares of Satan, and that the little ones of the flock may be sheltered from every wind of evil

doctrine. Yes; this is the fondest desire of my heart; it cannot be otherwise to such as love the church and who know something of the love that Jesus has for His own, of the privileges which belong to them, and who know something also of the snares and the machinations of the enemy. Moreover, I think that the relation of the pastor to the sheep of God's flock, is the sweetest and the most precious which exists on earth. In its fruits and its joy, this relation will not end there."

Again: "We are taught in the word (Eph. 4), that pastors are gifts from on high, which Christ distributes"; and it is said, "Nay, further, when a person has been owned, the heart, the conscience, the affections, and respect are engaged; it is a bond, a bond formed by the exercise of the gift, in the heart of such as have profited thereby. The heart that has received blessing responds to the action of the Holy Ghost which has taken place by means of the brother who has been its instrument; and thus the heart attaches itself to that instrument, and owns God in him. God's will is that it should be so, and he binds together the members of the body by these mutual helps. And this is very particularly applicable to a pastor, whose task is to my mind the most difficult that exists. What powerful link does not result when we have thus owned one from whom we have received blessing, who has led us on, counselled us, warned us, preserved us from danger, and has made us know God, our God, better? The fact is that, according to my experience, there is more danger of overvaluing than of under-valuing a true pastor. Nevertheless, I see that the apostle puts very great value upon such affections." In the first tract, entitled, "On the formation of churches," you again find these words, "If God raises up pastors

from among you, or sends them among you, it is well; it is a great blessing," etc.

Here are now a few words extracted from the last Report of the School of Theology (see General Meeting of the Evangelical Society of Geneva, Second Anniversary, p. 49): "The sole fact of the keeping up of our school as it is, the accomplishment of its present modest task, the furnishing two or three ministers of the gospel a year, appears to us worthy of the labours with which we are honoured," etc.

From the quotations we have just given, it will be easy to see who are these that speak in the more scriptural way:65 whether the professors, whose "school furnishes two or three ministers a year," or those Christians, who only own the ministers given by the Lord Himself, according to His grace and sovereign goodness to His church, which is His body.

## Introduction

If, in the series of pamphlets of which the present one forms a part, it were a mere question of forms of churches, I should not have the courage to write again on the same subject. But it is not so. Certain questions, which, in the eyes of some, merely relate to forms of churches, are, at bottom, of the deepest importance, since in reality they bear on a most serious thing, namely, on the responsibility of the whole church of God. Reasoning about forms may indeed be introduced into the discussion, but it is because the forms bring to light the principles which are connected with them.

If some persons refuse to occupy their minds with these things, under the pretence that they are but secondary

points, this is only an artifice of the enemy. For behind all this, as we have already said, we find the solemn question, Is the church of God responsible for the present state in which it is found? It is scarcely denied now that the state of things which existed in the days of the apostles no longer exists at present. Undoubtedly many things remain in our day, as then; there are Christians, and the church possesses certain gifts. But that visible unity, where the Holy Ghost displayed His power, so that the grace and power of Christ, manifested in the body of the church, were seen by the world itself, because the Spirit of the Head dwelt in the body; where is, I say, that unity? It no longer exists. The “So also is Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12), to use the expression of the apostle, is no longer perceivable. Two answers have been made to what has been said of the guilt of the church and of the final judgment that awaits the whole system.

It has been alleged, first, that the church has no unity as a society of persons; and, secondly, that we are not responsible for the evil that others have done before us, although we suffer from it. This last point, especially, is of the highest importance. I do affirm, that the church has been placed on earth to display, as a body, in a visible unity, the glory of its Head, by the Holy Ghost. This it no longer does; it is responsible for it, and, regarded as a dispensation, it will be punished on that account, although the faithful are sure of being saved in glory. We have in the word a great number of passages and principles, which prove this community of interest and this responsibility in the church. The fact that its ruin is an opportunity for marked faithfulness on the part of individuals, in nowise affects the truth

established by these passages. The Lord told the Jews: “Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,” Luke 13:35. Those whom the Lord addressed will never utter these words, but the nation will, at least the remnant of their posterity. Ten virgins went forth to meet the Bridegroom (Matt. 25); they are the same ten virgins who are there when the cry is heard, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh!” The same evil servant also is there, when the master returns (Matt. 24:48-51); and it is the same as to those who had received the talents, Matt. 25. Are we not all identified with the sin of Adam? Do not the tares grow until the harvest? And will not the harvest take place for the tares, as well as for the wheat? As to this, we will mention farther on other judgments declared by the word of God.

But we have no need to insist on this scriptural notion of the unity of the whole system from its beginning to its end. The question is very simple and of the greatest solemnity. Is the church responsible for the state in which it is found, or can it say, like the Jews, in Jeremiah 31:29: “The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge”? An infidel, speaking of himself, may say: If I have inherited the bad condition of Adam, it is no fault of mine; I suffer from it, but I am not responsible for it. God, in the government of the world and of His people, does not judge thus; He treats man as responsible, and He acts towards His people, as considering them to be responsible for the state in which they are found. They have been themselves in the evil; they are partakers in it. His grace may deliver one individual or another from the eternal consequences of sin, but those consequences are none the less certain for

the human race. Grace may deliver children of God from the order of things which is going to be judged, so that they be gathered into the barn in time of harvest (Matt. 13:30); but they are taken away from the coming judgment, because the church is responsible.

The church is in a state of ruin; it has ceased to bear testimony to the glory of Christ, as it ought to have done, and as it did indeed at the beginning. When I come to the discovery of this sad and overwhelming truth, I feel my responsibility; and I think it is enough to put the question thus, in order to reach the conscience of those whose ear is open to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and who have at heart the glory of Christ. To abide faithful, under this conviction, is the means of being able to enjoy a safe shelter in Him who keeps His own for glory, whatever be withal the circumstances in which they may be found. Nevertheless, this will not prevent God from manifesting that He has looked upon the dispensation as being responsible, when He will put an end to it by judgment. And if God has given a testimony as to this (and He has done so), does not the responsibility already lie on us? Here it is that Romans 11 finds an important application.

In the following pages, these truths are only treated in connection with the point to which the controversy has been brought. But I wish it to be well understood that this is just the question to be decided with respect to the state of the church. Are we responsible, and are we to be judged as such, if after having been warned we are walking in that which the Lord is going to judge? The solution of this question must of necessity act upon those who entertain a hope of re-establishing the church; for they deny at the very same time both its

unity and its responsibility, in order to satisfy themselves with those few small bodies which they have formed. Hence these two questions are very closely connected, and I attach importance to the question of the formation of churches, because it is linked with that of our common responsibility.

My desire is that we may indeed remember that we are responsible for the state in which we are found, and not for the acts of the Christians who lived before us, although these acts may have helped in bringing on that state of things. The church as a body has been placed on earth to glorify the Son of God. Alas! it must be owned with confusion of face, that the church does not glorify Him now. The word of God shews us that there is a solidarity or rather an accumulation of responsibility, and that we inherit the sin of those who have gone before us in a course of departure from God, when it is a question of His government with respect to a dispensation. “Thy first father hath sinned,” says Isaiah (Isa. 43:27). “Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch,” says Stephen (Acts 7:43), alluding to the sin of Israel in the wilderness, “and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.” The Jews undergo to this day the consequences of the sin which they committed in the wilderness, of all those which they have since added thereto, and the measure of which they have filled up by putting to death the Lord Jesus.

## General Remarks

State of the Discussion—On the Future Dispensation—On the Unity of the Church—Millennium—Falling Away or Apostasy—The Church as a Society.

It is a most solemn thing for a servant of Christ to write on subjects which may stamp a certain character on the state of the church, or at least, act on the hearts and conduct of God's children. Nevertheless, when one feels assured of the Lord's will, all becomes a subject of joy; for the Christian ought only to feel happy while accomplishing in obedience His service here below. Moreover, although the subject I am treating be important, my task is now very simple.

I shall not revert to what has already been fully discussed, nor to what may be considered as more or less personal. I should not probably have answered, had I not seen that our discussion has made a very great advance, and that it might be profitable for all to state it fully. My wish also is to bring out what may act upon the conscience of those who seek the truth, and who have their heart open to receive it, without confining myself exclusively to answer the tract which has been the occasion of the present one. The pamphlet of our brother, Mr. Rochat, has afforded me, as regards the main points, matter for very much joy. I say, as regards the main points, because I cannot say that the spirit of it gave me pleasure: nevertheless, my intention is in no wise to dwell on that. If Mr. Rochat does not wish me to love him much ("A Thread," etc., pp. 5, 6), or at least to say that I love him, I must love him in spite of himself. If he thinks that to flatter him when I find him in error, or to appear to agree with him when I do not, is to shew love, after having reflected ever so little he will feel with me that such love would not bear any resemblance to Christ's love. In this respect, I ever ask myself: If we were about to die together, is there any word among those I have uttered, which I should have to regret?

After all, we are liable to be mistaken, whether on the score of judgment, or because we may also be lacking in watchfulness; although, on the other hand also, if the eye be single, the whole body will be full of light (Matt. 6:22).

I begin by stating the advance we have made, as it seems to me, in the discussion. Our brother acknowledges (p. 73), that there is a future dispensation; that the present dispensation is to be followed by another. I cannot say how far he acknowledged this before; I merely seek to state the point to which we are arrived. If he was in error before, I would forget his error; if he was in the truth, to state the truth, as to which we are agreed, can only do good to us all. There is to be "another dispensation," he says, "in which the Jewish people will act a principal part; where Jesus Christ, in Person, will reign over the earth, with the risen saints; and that dispensation will be preceded by the falling away of what is called Christendom, accompanied by the manifestation of the Antichrist" (p. 71). Up to this word, I quite agree with the author. I cannot say there is no accidental error, when he goes on thus: "followed by severe judgments of God on the nations which have rebelled against Christ." Of course, the dispensation will be "followed" by severe judgments. Yet I do not suppose that Mr. Rochat denies that it will be introduced also by severe judgments. Perhaps he meant to say that the falling away would be followed, etc., etc. However this may be, what I have quoted is sufficient. I shall point out, farther on, the points as to which I do not see that our brother has well understood as yet the character of the coming dispensation. At all events, there is to be another

dispensation where Christ will be present, and which will be preceded by a general falling away and the manifestation of the Antichrist. This is evidently a most important truth for the church of God.66 We shall farther on call the attention of brethren to a few considerations connected with it. Let us come to the unity of the church.

“There is,” says Mr. Rochat (p. 25), “the general assembly and the church of the firstborn,” and (p. 27) there are churches. But in page 26, he gives us another idea of the church, which is very just, and very important practically: “The church on earth, at each successive period, is thus the aggregate of the elect which are then manifested.” It is in this sense, adds our brother, “that it is said that God has established in the church, first apostles,” etc., etc. That is just the sense which I meant to present, which I have pressed, and which appears to me most essential as regards our responsibility and the judgment which we form of the state in which we are. If the church on earth is the aggregate of the elect manifested at each period, in what state is this aggregate found at the present time? I have also some considerations which appear to me important to present on this point. I merely point out by the way this manner of looking at the church. Our brother owns that his views on the subject are modified; it matters little what instrument has produced this change, provided it be through the teaching of God (p. 25, note).

There is another thing as to which our brother admits a principle, which tells all that I could wish on the subject. “If I am a member of the whole body,” he says (p. 41), “I am a member of the parts of that body.” I insist on this.

A Christian does become a member of a local church (if, however, one can admit this expression of “member of a church,” for it is now owned to be unscriptural); he is a member of the parts of the body, if he is a member of the body.

Nothing more simple; we cannot become what we are already; and, according to Mr. Rochat, if I am a member of the whole body, I am a member of the parts of this body, which meet in divers places: it is not a question of becoming such— I am such already. This is the principle I have always maintained, and on which I have insisted and acted. By the very fact that I am a Christian, I have all the claims of a member of the body, wherever I may be found. It is not a right which I acquire by joining any particular body; it is a right which I possess as any member of the body of Christ. Let brethren weigh well this principle which Mr. Rochat asserts, and on which I insist. Practically, the whole question between us is thereby decided.

Mr. Rochat also admits that the expression of “a member of a church” is not scriptural. We know how much the habits of brethren have been formed from that expression, and how much it has guided their conduct; so that in many localities, if a person did not declare himself member of a church, he was not admitted among brethren to partake of the Lord’s supper. It was not enough to be a member of the body of Christ, a faithful Christian, owned of all.67 The whole of this system was wrong, according to the principle now owned as true by Mr. Rochat himself.

But our brother wishes, instead of the expression of “member of a church,” to substitute that of “forming a

part (p. 51) of a particular church," or "being of such a church." I have examined the list Mr. Rochat gives, in his "Simple Scriptural Views," of the passages which contain the word church, and I find that these expressions are not more scriptural than the former. The idea of being a member of a particular body is not found in Scripture in any form whatever; the idea is not scriptural.

Finally, it is owned on both sides, that there will be another dispensation, in which Christ will reign personally over the earth; that, before that period, a general falling away will take place. The signs of the times announce the approach of the glorious reign of the Lord. The church on earth is the aggregate of the elect which are manifested there; if anyone is a member of that church, he is also a member of its parts, that is, of the churches. Our brother admits that a portion of the church is mixed up with Christendom, and he acknowledges that the description I gave of it is, for the most part, correct. That would suffice also to shew that the sum total of all the churches would not be the church; but I do not now insist on this.

I resume the first of the subjects mentioned above, in order to shew, I do not hesitate to say, in what respect our brother has not yet laid hold of the truth with respect to the doctrine of the millennium. "The consideration," he says, "of the eternal glory (p. 72) appears to me much more fruitful, in consequences of every kind; for what are the thousand years when compared with eternity? Moreover, the millennial glory is not that of heaven, where God will be all and in all."

This phrase contains such confused ideas, that the best and indeed the only answer to make to it is to present the scriptural truths on this point. If Mr. Rochat takes the trouble to study the passage which he now applies to the coming dispensation, he will find that God purposes to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth, and that heaven is the place where the millennial glory will shine with greatest brightness. When Mr. Rochat speaks of heaven, and says that God will there be all and in all, he falls into complete confusion. Is not Christ in heaven? There is no connection between heaven and this declaration "That God may be all in all," 1 Cor. 15:28. The difference which there is between the time which precedes and God being all in all, is that the essentially mediatorial glory will be ended, and Christ will have given up the kingdom to God the Father. It is here a question of a period of time and not of a place. Christ will always be in heaven; the church will be in heaven always with the Lord, enjoying all the blessings in the heavenlies, before the time when God will be all in all. And even then the church will be essentially in its state of eternal glory. And so little is it true that there is any idea of heaven attached to the words, "God all in all," that the only other passage which speaks of that post-millennial state rather presents the idea that men will be upon the earth, although heaven be mentioned, Rev. 21:1-8.

If I do not mistake, 1 Corinthians 15 and Revelation 21 are the only passages which speak of the time when God will be all in all—a time which indeed gives rise to thoughts that are full of blessing and deeply interesting. Nevertheless, God has thought fit to present much oftener, and with much more detail, the coming of

Christ, and His glory to the conscience and heart of the faithful. Then we shall be like Him; then we shall see Him as He is. The object of God's predestination will be accomplished as to us, and we shall be conformed to the image of His Son. The marriage of the Lamb will have taken place. His bride will have been presented to Himself, having no spot or wrinkle or any of such things. We shall be then in our Father's house, Jesus having come for us in order to introduce us there, that where He is there we may be also. The desire of Christ's heart will be accomplished: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

I do not know whether our dear brother has postponed all this till the time when God will be all in all, or if he considers it as of small importance. However it may be, he is entirely mistaken when he says that the millennial glory is not that of heaven, for we shall see Christ as He is, we shall be like Him, and we shall be either raised or changed; we shall go to meet Him; we shall be ever with the Lord, and we shall reign for ever and ever. The difference is not that heaven does not form a part of this glory, but that it is the mediatorial glory of the Son of man; afterwards He will have given up the kingdom.

Before the time when God will be all in all, we have the house and love of the Father, the marriage of the Lamb, the Bridegroom and the Bride, a state of glory equal to that of the angels, which will never cease, and the seeing Christ as He is, we being like Him. The reign over the earth, however excellent and full of blessing, is only the inferior part of the glory of the saints who will dwell with the Lord in the heavenlies. If it be true that

the word of God shews us in two passages the end of this state of things, considered as a dispensation, it is equally true that it acts upon our hopes, our hearts, and our consciences, by the thought of the joy of being with Christ in glory, of being with Him in the Father's house, of being in the place where God Himself will be the temple, where God Himself and the Lamb will be the light. Such is the millennium, such is the heavenly Jerusalem, though God be not yet all in all.

As to the earthly part, I think that our brother (p. 73) has wrongly applied these words: "He unites the Jews and the heathen into one body, establishes them heirs, and gives to both access by one Spirit unto the Father." It is never said of the Gentiles that they will be one body with the Jews during the millennium. The contrary is the case. See, for instance, Isaiah 60, 61, 62. It is never said that they will be joint heirs, but the very contrary, and, indeed, not even a single passage can be shewn, where the last expression— "access by one Spirit unto the Father" is applied to the millennium. It is confounding the body of Christ, raised for the heavenly glory, with the state of the Jews, the elect people on earth, and with the state of the Gentiles, who, though blessed, are in a state of inferiority with respect to the Jews, as a multitude of passages proves.

Finally, the author does not believe that the millennium applies to heaven, although heaven be the most important part of the glory of that day of God; and he applied the passages which speak of the privileges of the body of Christ then in heaven, to the Jews and Gentiles who will be on earth, during the millennium, in a completely different state.

I would now present a few considerations on the falling away and the manifestation of the Antichrist. We have here, as I said, an extremely important practical truth, a truth admitted by Mr. Rochat's tract. This dispensation will end by a general falling away (p. 73), which the signs shew us to be near. Mark well that such is the doom of Christendom. And what is to terminate the falling away? The judgment of this world by the presence of Christ. Can one say then (p. 78), that it is the same dispensation of the grace of God, which will last till the end of the world? Mr. Rochat consents to substitute in the room of the word phasis that of dispensation; but it is always, he says, the same dispensation of the grace of God. Is then the judgment of this habitable earth of all the living (the church being raised and glorified), is that a continuation of the dispensation of grace? Why weaken the effect of such solemn truths, truths that God has revealed, that they may act upon the conscience? I repeat my question: Is then the judgment of the living on earth a continuation of the dispensation of grace? Or does Mr. Rochat think that it is not even necessary to point out, that this judgment interupts the dispensation, although it requires the presence of Christ for its execution? Moreover, I think he will find that the coming dispensation is precisely a dispensation of judgment on the earth, which contrasts with grace, as a multitude of passages declares (Psa. 96, 97, 98, 99; Isa. 32; Psa. 72), although it be always true that it is only grace which saves individuals in every dispensation.

What grieves me in our brother's pamphlet is that, while disputing about words, he could remain silent as to the most solemn testimony God has given us on the state of

things in which we are, and that he has sought to weaken the importance of the warnings which flow therefrom for the church. If the Lord be near, as Mr. Rochat tells us, and as I believe He is, is it not true that He comes to judge, because the present state of things demands and requires judgment? Is it then that the Lord comes to judge and to reap, before the tares and the wheat are ripe? And if Christendom is in a state which provokes this, judgment, or if it is hastening to become such, is it the time for saying, that there are other things of greater importance? Is it right, while admitting with difficulty that it is another dispensation, to pass over the universal judgment of the living and the harvest of God, without saying a word on the subject, and even with the assertion, that what is to follow will be a continuation of the dispensation of grace?

One remark more. There will be, then, a general falling away, an apostasy. But the evil which characterises the last days had already begun in the days of the apostles; the mystery of lawlessness was already working; and it was already sufficiently developed before their death to enable one of them to inform us that many antichrists had already come, so that they knew that it was the last hour, 1 John 2:18. One may cry up the continuation of the churches; and yet there was evil enough in the days of the apostle John to point to the last hour as having already come. I beg leave to notice here that those who have not received the light, which has produced this conviction of the general ruin of the dispensation, and who believe that popery and the Pope are the accomplishment of 2 Thessalonians 2, etc.—that those, I say, cannot deny that the apostasy has already come. Such was the general belief before the introduction of

those doctrines which are so much cried down. If the habit of speaking as all Christians have spoken until now has led to a vague application of a term, the use of which has been amply explained, it must be regretted, that people have followed others too much and conformed too much with custom.

In presence of such important truths, of judgments so awful as those which are soon about to fall on this rebellious world, I do not think fit to enter into further explanations of words, when things are so clear on the subject.68 It is admitted that in Christendom there will be a general falling away, that the principles of this falling away were sufficiently ripe in the days of the apostles for John to say that there were already many antichrists, and that it was the last hour. It is allowed that a certain portion of Christians are confounded with the object of the judgment, which is about to be executed. Let those who choose dispute on the word “apostasy” and on the sense it has in the French dictionaries, provided the conscience of God’s children be reached by this truth, that we are in the last hour, that Christendom is at the eve of judgments. Besides, it is not merely a question here of a few branches in open unbelief, which are to be cut off; neither is it a question of a certain separation of the righteous; for it is now admitted by Mr. Rochat that the Christians who are manifested will be raised or changed, and will go to meet the Lord Jesus. As to those who have fallen away, they will be cut off, so that all that belongs to this dispensation will have come to an end. It is no longer a question of the saints or the apostates here below. Most certainly God will spare some of the Jews and some of the Gentiles for another dispensation: but He will make

an end of all that is called church, as to this world, and this very soon.

Let us now turn to the church. The writer admits that the church is the aggregate of the elect manifested on earth. It is very evident that it is not the aggregate of the churches, because as Mr. Rochat himself acknowledges, a part of the elect manifested (and every one acknowledges that it is a great part) are not found in those churches. Mr. Rochat rejects the idea of unity, as the unity of a society of persons here below. I had borrowed the expression of a “society-church” from his pamphlet, only rejecting the idea of a confederation of churches. Let it be remembered, that I fully admit the existence of the local churches at the beginning, and the duty of meeting together outside the world which is about to be judged. Mr. Rochat admits that the passage, “God has set in the church; first, apostles: secondly, prophets,” etc., applies to the church on earth, as the aggregate of the manifested elect. Now, I ask if this body with its members, its joints of supply working according to the measure of each one part for its self-building up in love, formed a unity as the unity of a society?

Mr. Rochat says (p. 34) that the passages I have quoted apply to the internal unity manifested, maintained, and developed by certain charges, but not a unity as of a society. He admits at the same time that one of these passages at least applies to the aggregate of the elect manifested at a certain period, in a word, to the church on earth. For my part, I cannot give a better definition of a society, than that of an aggregate of persons having an internal unity, manifested, maintained, and developed by certain charges.69 But whether it be called a society, or another name be given to it, it is admitted that there is

an aggregate of elect persons, at a given period, or, if one will, an internal unity manifested, maintained, and developed by certain charges, and that unity is the aggregate of the elect at that period. It cannot be denied that the aggregate of Christians formed one body at the time of the apostles. That unity manifested, maintained, developed by these charges, existed then. Where is it now? Then it was a body working by its joints of supply on earth.

At the present time, a great part of the aggregate of the elect on earth is mixed up with that which is not the church; indeed, the greater part of the church is nowise holding the church position, but is to be found even where the falling away of Christendom is preparing, while Christendom is every day becoming more worthy of the judgments of God. The Christian society as a body, acting by the joints of supply, does no longer exist as it did exist; it has ceased to work; its unity has ceased to be visible on earth. Mr. Rochat contents himself with churches; but where is the aggregate of the elect in a manifested unity? And of all he can produce of these churches, where is the common action of the joints of the body in the aggregate of the elect—in the church? As to that state of things, the result of an evil which had made progress enough in the days of the apostle, for him to call those days “the last hour,” for him to tell the faithful that there were many antichrists, I leave to our brother to characterise such a state of things by the name he may prefer. Does he deny that the church—the aggregate of the elect on earth—did constitute a society, whose members formed part of a body, which was working in its unity on earth—manifested unity? If he does not deny it, where is that unity now? Where is that

unity of working in the aggregate of the elect? Was there not in the days of the apostles a constituted body, which contained all the elect which were manifested on earth? I ask the question, where is it to be found now?70 Having made these remarks on the points where there has been some advance, I resume the different objects of the pamphlet. Mr. Rochat tells me (p. 15) that the ordinances were not decreed only by the apostles and the elders. It is of the word of God he must complain, and not of me. It is true that in the address it is added the church. But when the Holy Spirit speaks of the ordinances which were decreed, He says in Acts 16:4 of the decrees “ordained by the apostles and elders”; and it was the apostles and elders who had “come together to consider of this matter.” Further, does our brother seriously believe that the brethren at Jerusalem, even supposing that their church was formed on his own principles, could have had the idea that a church in our day might have the right to send decrees to other churches? When it is said, “And to us” (Acts 15:28), did not this refer to men having some direct authority? Could any gathering, convinced that a doctrine is presented in the word, send a decree to other gatherings? No! There was then an authority and a capacity, which no longer exist.

## Of the Church and its Responsibility—Ruin and Cutting Off

I refer here to an essential principle, I mean the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth. The New Testament always speaks of the Holy Spirit as being on earth, having been sent from on high, when Christ had ascended, although inasmuch as He is God He is

necessarily everywhere. He therefore becomes the centre71 of a unity on earth. Indeed, in this respect, the dead are even, so to speak, lost sight of; their bodies not being raised, they cannot have a part in the manifestation of the glory of Christ. Their happy souls (for they are with the Lord), being absent from the body, cannot be the instruments of that glory. And this is still more manifest as regards the body. But the One Spirit on earth is the bond of unity for all the believers who are found there. It is in them that the glory of Christ ought to be manifested, not only as individuals, but, above all, as a body, the One Spirit being the bond of unity for the whole body on earth. Hence, I am not afraid to say, that the state of things which existed in the primitive church does no longer exist. After all, this is generally admitted. That unity which ought to have existed that the world might believe exists no longer. The certainty of the salvation of the elect, and the fact that there are such on earth, have nothing to do with this question. The intention of God was that there should be a manifestation of unity on earth. This manifestation, this state of things, no longer exist. As to inward life, we are agreed: it is but one; the destiny of the church, inasmuch as it possesses that life, is to inherit glory with Christ. I do not make the unity of the body to consist in that, as Mr. Rochat supposes; it is the internal source of it, as the fact of being born a Vaudois is the source of the unity of the Vaudois. Without dwelling on this distinction, it is enough to say that the destiny of the church, in this point of view, is one. On the other hand, the present dispensation has a destiny here below, as the Jewish economy had one, and in the point of view of the responsibility of man, it is the purity and the faithfulness of the church, which are the basis on which

this destiny rests. The universal church of the elect manifested on earth was to shew forth in the world the glory of Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, as a city situated on the top of a mountain; it was to be the salt of the earth—and all that in its unity, being composed of all those who believe. That is what existed in the beginning. I do not say that, if some of its parts detach themselves from it, as a society, the church ceases to exist, as Mr. Rochat makes me to say. What I say is, that corrupt men, "marked out beforehand for this sentence," have got unnoticed into the church; that the mystery of lawlessness already worked at the beginning, and that the aggregate, the body of the church on earth, is in a state of disorganisation and corruption. I say that it has ceased to manifest on earth that unto which God had called it. The fault is not with God, but with man. No; God is not responsible for this, although by means of it His counsels be accomplished. If there is a fault (and fault there must be somewhere, if the good that God had done has been marred and corrupted), there is responsibility; someone is guilty. Is it denied that the aggregate of the church on earth is corrupted and disorganised, and that the testimony which God had established in the unity of the church of believers is marred and has failed in the world? If it is denied, I ask, where is that testimony? Why does God put an end to the dispensation, if the testimony which ought to have been rendered to His glory subsists in all its force? But if, in effect, corruption and disorganisation do exist in the church, if the testimony of God to the world scarcely subsists, if the name of Christ is blasphemed in the midst of the world, by means of Christians—of the church, to deny the responsibility of men, of Christians, is indisputably the most evident antinomianism.

Before going further, I would here notice by the way, one of the arguments of our brother, Mr. Rochat, as a sample. He had attributed to me several things which are not in my tract; among others, that the sin of the church had caused apostleship to cease. He justifies himself by this reasoning. The tract, he says (p. 12), appears to him to establish two principles: the one, that without apostles there could be no churches on the primitive footing; the other, that it was because of the iniquity of man that those churches, constituted on the primitive footing, had ceased. I reason in the same way as to familiar circumstances: since the departure of a certain physician, there is no cure for a certain disease. Those who are attacked with it owe this to their excesses; therefore it is evident that it is these excesses which drive away the physician!… Having noticed this one sample of reasoning, I pass over everything that does not refer to some truth which is important for the conscience of all.

With respect to depreciating simple brethren, may God preserve us from doing so! What I desire is, that brethren— whether simple or not simple—may be exactly what the Spirit has made them in the church. Humbleness of heart and the power of the Holy Spirit can alone lead us to this result—so precious and so full of peace for all and for each one in particular.72 If all the brethren gave up self-seeking, and every idea of rights, to seek only the edification of all in a spirit of obedience, all such questions would fall to the ground.

There are two dangers to be avoided: one, that a brother who has received certain gifts be led unwittingly to absorb everything in the exercise of them, while only seeking at bottom the good of all; the other, that those

who have little gift be jealous of the gifts of their brethren, instead of profiting by them, since the gift which any one does possess is not for himself but is the portion of all. Who could be jealous of the skill of a physician, when it was a question of his health and the health of his friends? After all, it is grace alone which can remove difficulties of this kind. Woe to those who despise one of those little ones whom Jesus loves, or, as our brother, Mr. Rochat, expresses it, who despise the Holy Spirit in that little one. Happy those, on the other hand, who walk with humility, and who strengthen, by prayer and by cordial affection, the hands of one whom Christ has raised up to labour for the good of souls, according to the love of that faithful Saviour.

The fear of God is here of the highest importance; and if the heart of the faithful always knows how to love the poor of the flock, because Christ loves them, the ambitious flesh of man is as much in need of this precept, “Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause” (Exod. 23:3), as of the one which forbids honouring “the person of the mighty,” Lev. 19:15. Such as serve Christ alone in everything will be blessed and rewarded by Him in glory at the last day. May God grant unto all of us to seek only His glory.

I now desire to reply in a few words to this question of our brother Mr. Rochat (p. 16): will His Spirit fail us, when our desire is to seek to walk according to His intentions? The Spirit will not fail us. I have already expressed myself as to this, and in such a manner that it led Mr. Rochat to say that I did not seem to despair of seeing apostles again appear (p. 94, note), although I have never spoken of it. But what I ask, both for me and for my brethren, is that we may not go beyond the

measure of the acting of the Spirit amongst us; and that with a view of coming to an organisation of which we may have formed an idea to ourselves, we may not be doing things in which the Spirit of God could not act with us, and where, consequently, we should be acting by ourselves (that is, according to the flesh), if even it were to imitate that which existed formerly.

One word more on the question of ruin and cutting off. It is not denied that there is a state of declension in the church, nor that some day there will be an apostasy and a cutting off. (Mr. Rochat, p. 21). It appears to me that in two respects our brother has not understood this question. First, a state of failure which cannot be restored has no connection with a cutting off, as he supposes: for the one is the fault and iniquity of man, while the other is the judgment of God. Even in a church, is the failure of a Christian or of a hypocrite, whose restoration (I do not say conversion) is impossible —is it, I say, the same thing as his being cut off? The cutting off is judgment executed; the failure, however serious and irremediable it may be, is a fault, the manifestation of an evil disposition. Nothing more simple; and so it is in the passage which has given occasion for the use of the word (Rom. 11:22): “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” —or cut away. The cutting off is the consequence of the failure. If the vine of the earth has produced nothing but sour grapes instead of good grapes, that is not a cutting off, but the cause of a terrible judgment, which He will execute, who “treadeth

the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God," Rev. 19:15.

Our brother speaks of a time of declension in the church or in the dispensation of the church. Such was the case of the churches in Revelation, for instance, and that may very well bring in the cutting off of the church which is in such a state. But here it is not a question of this, but of an immense system of evil, called the mystery of lawlessness; a mystery which was already working in the days of the apostles, which was connecting itself with Christianity, which was acting within its bosom, and was taking its form, and which succeeded in arrogating to itself alone every true Christian right. It is not something good that has somewhat corrupted itself, nor some few branches openly in unbelief which are cut away. It is a mystery of lawlessness which mars the whole; it is a leaven, which has leavened the whole lump, so that the apostle could say, Men will be so and so, etc. (2 Tim. 3:5), "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." It is an evil which will end in a general falling away and the manifestation of the lawless one, when that which restrains is removed; an evil which, when the church will have been raised or changed, will be followed by the universal judgment of all the living, that is, of all the habitable world, so that God will have put an end to the dispensation in its principles and in its form. It is a state which causes the Lord to say, that "in the day when the Son of man is revealed," it shall be as in the days of Noah and in those of Lot (Luke 17:26-30); and, in another place: "when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8).

Our brother speaks as if the apostasy or falling away was a future thing, quite detached, and affecting only some branches, which will be cut away; whereas it is but the unveiling of an immense evil, of a work of Satan contrived under the veil of Christianity, which had already begun in the days of the apostles, and which was then sufficiently ripe for enabling one to say, “It is the last hour.”

It was not the state of a church, but an evil which influenced the result of the introduction of Christianity into the world, so that God was no longer glorified there by means of this, but on the contrary, judgment should begin from His house—a judgment which is to fall on every part of the habitable world. The apostasy is not an isolated future fact; but the revelation of a state of things, all the elements of which are ripe before its manifestation; which ripens under the form of Christianity, having borrowed its ordinances, having given to it forms, which, substituted for life, hold in bondage even those who possess life, and hinder the manifestation of the truth and of the glory of Christ, until the moment when, everything being undermined and God Himself having removed that which restrains, the public falling away will break out and thus call for the judgment of God. I will add here, that I have no doubt that there will be a blessed manifestation of the elect before the catastrophe of the world. God will bring them out from among the worldly, that they may not be condemned with the world. It was so at Jerusalem before the judgment of that city; so that I expect, through the gospel, a work which fills with joy the heart of the believer.

## On the Admission of Believers into the Church — Responsibility—Primitive Churches — Receiving into Local Churches—On the Passage, Acts 2:47.

Our brother says in his chapter on the unity of the church (p. 27), “The privilege and duty of those who are manifested as members of the body of Christ is to join the church which the Lord has gathered for Himself in the locality they inhabit.” Our brother forgets that things went on quite differently in the primitive church. A man brought to the faith of Christ was baptised,73 and thus outwardly manifested; but he was not baptised as member of a church, but as member of the church; he was introduced into Christ’s assembly. It might so happen, that it was in an isolated place where there were no Christians, as was the case of the eunuch of the court of Candace; but that changed nothing as to his admission. The reception of a Christian was not a reception into a particular church. There was only one baptism for the body of Christ,74 sign of admission into the universal assembly on earth, but not necessarily into the assembly in heaven. Let us pay attention to this; baptism, that outward act which did not answer universally or necessarily to the internal unity (witness, Simon Magus),75 was the sign of an outward unity (as of a society of persons), by which sign all were of one body here below, without its being, however, the body of Christ viewed as the assembly of the elect unto eternal life.

I do not speak now of the state of that outward body at that time, nor its safeguards for its purity which existed in the circumstances of Christianity, in the evident power of the Holy Spirit in the strength of love and

discipline which acted therein. I only speak of the fact, that there was a society on earth, the members of which were admitted by a certain form, by means of which all were supposed to be, and were, in fact, members of that society, until, as it might happen, they were excluded from it for some violation of its rules. If I am told that this society has been corrupted and no longer answers to God's intention in the establishment of it; that it is, on the contrary, the seat of all that wars against the truth and against integrity of heart, or that, having forgotten its primitive discipline, it has allowed those to enter its sanctuary who despised all that it considered sacred: be it so; I believe it; but what cannot be denied is the existence of such a society at the beginning of Christianity, the members of which were recognised by baptism. That society had gifts, and ordinances, and government, whether local or general; that society was then the church, since the elect were there manifested in unity.

The church had the one baptism, as the one Spirit, and yet it was not either a particular church, or the internal unity of Christian life, which was formed by such means. Either this society has ceased to exist (and what exists now does not deserve to be considered as such), or it exists still in its unity as such, under all the solemn responsibilities as to which it completely fails—ripening, as a society, for the most severe judgments of God. Both these things may be said; but they demonstrate the truth of the position I maintain. Morally, as the representative of the glory of God on earth, this body no longer exists; it is the seat of the power of the enemy more than of the power of God. As to its responsibility, this body still exists. The servant who, instead of accomplishing his

service, beats his fellow-servants, and eats and drinks with the drunken, is judged as a servant. The responsibility does not depend on the accomplishment of the service, but on the position which demands that accomplishment.

Let those who, by the will of God, may read these pages, pay attention to the cause of the iniquity of this evil servant: he was saying in his heart, “My Lord delayeth his coming,” Matt. 24:48.

Finally, the church, as a society, nearly identical (and, as to the manifestation of the glory of God on earth, perfectly identical) with the church in its internal unity, did exist at the beginning. Where is it now? It is the intelligent answer to this question, which alone gives the solution of the difficulties presented by both Puseyism and nationalism, and the controversy on dissent.

Ministry and baptism, those two links between the exterior and interior of this society, are of necessity become the turning-points of these questions, and the occasions of the corruption of the society; of exaggerated pretensions on the part of those who will have it that the exterior alone is the church, and of so many difficulties on the other hand, for those who will only own as the church the internal society—difficulties which they cannot escape, until they admit the ruin in which we are found, not for eternity (because in this respect the faithfulness of God interposes), but as to the manifestation of the church for the glory of God here below. These difficulties will only disappear for them when they admit this ruin; because, as the Holy Spirit does not act at present in that power which made the exterior to be the expression of the interior, the

separation of those two things has left a gap which nothing can fill up as to this world, and which places us in a state of things where we are found guilty of having failed as to the manifestation of the glory of God on earth. This is a painful conviction, undoubtedly, and humbling for us, but in which we have, first, this consolation that God in His grace can never fail, and that we shall certainly have the heavenly glory; and, secondly, that God directs the hopes of those who are faithful, even in the midst of unfaithfulness, to that which in His counsels is the result of that ruin—to the glorious appearing of Christ, who will take us unto Himself, that we may appear with Him in glory, when He will appear to judge all this evil.

Finally, there is a consolation which is attached to faithfulness in the trial; and the result of obedience is always the enjoyment of more special communion with God, especially when that obedience is accomplished in the midst of departure from God and a general contempt of Him, in the midst of the moral rebellion of those who bear the name of God, who will bear it and arrogate to themselves alone (and perhaps more than ever) the privileges which belong to the Christian only. I say, more than ever; because it is a fact, that the greater the departure from God, the more those who hold to the outward order boast of their privileges, and do so as if they were the only persons favoured of God; that the glory and the importance of those privileges may be assigned to them. “The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord! “Such language comes not from the mouth of those who love the Lord who dwells in that temple. Elijah, while he bore witness in the midst of Israel to the glory of Him from whom Israel had departed, enjoyed an

intimacy with God, rarely found even among the prophets. Moses, when he had pitched a tabernacle without the camp, communed with God, and God “spake unto him face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.”

Moreover, if the pretensions of those who cling to outward forms do prevail, as I doubt not they will, at least for a time, and even under the worst form, let us remember that that which is internal is eternal. Eternal righteousness, in the Person of Christ, bowed its head for a moment before the presumption which used the ordinances of righteousness, as separated from Him, so that they rose up against Him—that righteousness, I say, rose nevertheless more glorious than ever, more sanctioned than ever, in resurrection and “at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” The act which had trodden under foot that righteousness only brought judgment and ruin on that presumption, which, having clothed itself with the glorious name of the ordinances of that righteousness, had succeeded in deceiving the world by their outward appearance. The Spirit of prophecy had said with Isaiah, “Therefore thou has forsaken thy people” (Isa. 2:6), before God had as yet executed any judgment.

I know that people will not have it that man is responsible for an evil which existed before he was born. It is true that as regards the final judgment of individuals, each one will bear his own burden; but such is not the course of God’s government in the world. As children of the first Adam we are all under the effects of his sin. The righteous blo6d shed upon earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias, who was slain between the temple and the altar, was

required of that generation which filled up the measure of their fathers, Matt. 23:35. The blood of prophets and saints, and of all the slain upon the earth, was found in Babylon, Rev. 18:24. As far as love is concerned, and as the family of Christ, we are all necessarily identified with the woes of those who are Christ's and with His glory which is cast down to the ground. I do not think that a Christian is in a position to reprove his brother, as he ought to do, and point out to him his sin, if he has not borne on his heart all the weight of that sin. I do not speak of atonement; that is evident. It is thus that Christ reproves. His love feels all the evil of which His brethren are guilty, as if it were His own, and this is what gives such energy to His intercession. It is in this sense that (according to the spirit of love) a Christian does not bear with the evil which is in his brother; and it is thus that I desire to speak of the sin of the church, for alas! the honour of Christ is lost, the beauty of that which He loves, and which was His glory, is passed away; the happiness of His own is weakened and almost destroyed.

It remains now for me to make a few remarks on details. When the church in any place was called the church of God, there is nothing more simple. As the word church means assembly, it is clear that the Christians of a certain place, being gathered together, were truly the assembly of that place, but it was not only the assembly that owned God, but that which God owned, and which enjoyed exclusively the privileges He could vouchsafe unto it, as being His assembly.

In like manner, at that time, the assembly of a city was that which was owned by the laws of the city, or the will of the emperor, and which alone enjoyed the privileges belonging to such an assembly. There could not be two.

The Greek word ‘ecclesia,’ that is, ‘church,’ in its primitive sense, applied to the constitutional assembly of those who had the right of citizenship in a city. It is in this sense it is used in Acts 19, in the case of Demetrius. The question is to know if, for us, the right of citizenship comes from admission into the church of a city, as in municipal cases, or else from our admission into the universal church. As to this right of each Christian, the heavenly citizens of such or such a place cannot dispute it to their brethren, unless the latter, through evil conduct, have deserved to be deprived of it. If they dispute it, they dispute the foundation and basis of their own rights, for they have none others but those which they deny to be sufficient for their brethren. They are rebelling against the rights of Him, who, with the same authority, vouchsafed this privilege to themselves and to those they reject; and they act like the Jews who raised difficulties to the admission of Gentiles, although they themselves held their rights from Him who had vouchsafed similar rights to the Gentiles. It appears that our brother, Mr. Rochat, does not now dispute this principle. As for me, my only desire is that the thing be fully established, that this principle be clearly brought to light, and that it be understood that every assembly which pretends to decide such a question denies the origin and source of all its own rights. If the right of heavenly citizenship, which God has granted to every Christian, is not sufficient in order to be received by the brethren of a certain locality, it is not sufficient for themselves; and if it be not sufficient for themselves, they can neither act as an assembly nor as Christians.

I desire to add a remark on what we read in Acts 2:47, “The Lord added to the church daily such as should be

saved." Here the word church cannot be taken as meaning some particular church. First, if that is the true sense, it is clear that now there is no longer any church, for God no longer acts thus. If this passage is carefully examined, it will be seen that the word which has perplexed translators (who have given some, "saved," some, "to be saved," others "who were saving themselves," etc.), is the word, I may say the technical word, used for the remnant of the Jews, who escaped the judgment of God. Thus it was that the disciples asked if "the saved" those who were to be saved, were numerous. This is what is told us in this passage: the way that God employed in His mercy to save this remnant, which He had destined to escape the judgment of the nation which had rejected the Saviour, was to add them to the church. But it is no question here of a particular church, for at that moment there was only one known assembly of God, the church which met at Jerusalem, but which was the church in every possible sense. Thus speaks Paul of the church in general. See Galatians 1:13; Philippians 3:6.

## Of Gifts Placed in the Church

It has been sought to weaken the proof of the existence of a universal church on earth, the internal unity of which was manifested, maintained, and developed, by shewing that gifts were found in the churches. I said— and the thing is evident— that gifts were to be exercised usually in the assemblies; and that, if there were prophets residing in a town, it might naturally be said, there are prophets in the church of that town. But when I said that gifts were placed in the church, not in the churches, I only quoted the express revelation of God, 1

Cor. 12:28. “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles,” etc. This is never said of a particular church, and cannot apply to it. Mr. Rochat now admits in his pamphlet that, when it is said, God has given some, apostles, this applies to the church, in the sense of the aggregate of the elect manifested on earth at a certain period. That is precisely what I say. There was an aggregate of elect persons on earth, which had a unity and joints of supply, and which thus formed a body, a society, an aggregate, the unity of which was recognised. Mr. Rochat acknowledges that this is true with respect to three of the gifts mentioned in the word. I believe it to be applicable to all, inasmuch as they are gifts; for those who possessed certain gifts, or other qualifications, were thereby rendered capable of filling charges which might be more or less circumscribed in their exercise, and which Mr. Rochat confounds with gifts. But at least, according to him, there were three of the gifts mentioned (p. 26), which were not placed in the churches, but in the church. Consequently there was the one body, the one church. And this is so true, that if one united all the churches, the aggregate of the church would not be realised; for it is evident that Paul, Timothy, Titus, Silvanus, and many others, did not belong to a particular church.

They walked with the church, if there was one in the place where they were; but they acted, in the exercise of their gifts, outside the churches, or in several churches at the same time. When Titus was in Crete to establish elders in every church, he did not act as a member of a local church; still more was it so in the case of apostles and prophets. Thus the most powerful action, the most striking, that which came most directly from Christ, was

outside the churches, though recognising them, just as I fully recognise that they existed in those days. These things were in the church of God on earth, as joints of supply which worked in the body, in the aggregate, the unity of which was thus proved and in part maintained.

I shall, farther on, add a few words on charges and gifts; I only mention them here to prove the existence of a church of God, as a body, on earth. When our brother pretends (p. 42), that some children of God have a kind of antipathy for the churches of the Lord, he mistakes. There are Christians who do not like to see that title wrongly applied, because they attach too great an importance to the idea of a church of the Lord and to the state in which the church of God was found, when the churches were owned of Him. They do not wish to lower the force of this expression, by applying it to gatherings, which would monopolise it without having a well-grounded claim to it, and thus depreciate in the eyes of the world a precious title, and destroy the true idea of the church and the churches, among those who appropriate that title to themselves. Hence the wrong use made of this word by those who apply it to themselves alone has kept away from the churches a great number of persons.

It is in those countries where Christians have had the pretension to be the church, that the most sincere children of God have had the greatest dread of this. It does not follow, because the Lord sent messages to the primitive churches, that all the assemblies which, in our day, arrogate to themselves that title, because they have been organised in such or such a way, ought to be owned when everything is in a state of ruin. Without doubt, the gathering of the children of God in each

locality is a thing infinitely precious and well-pleasing to the Lord; but it is not because they call themselves the church, that this union is well-pleasing to Him, but because, according to the will of Christ, they are united, and united, because there is but one Spirit who is in them all, and who attracts them one towards another by the constraining power of His love. Moreover, the word church signifies an assembly, it is the assembly of those who have common privileges, and it is important that this should be known, in order not to exclude from it those who hold these privileges from God Himself.

## Nomination of Elders

I have reasons for thinking that the author will no longer insist now on Acts 14:23. At all events, since it is an important passage, and the only one which might seem to present the assemblies as participating in the choice of elders, I will say a word more on the subject. Mr. Rochat would prefer leaving out the expression of “the church” or “the assembly,” in the passage, because it is not in the Greek. But we must remember that the point in question is the participation of the assembly.

Our brother tells us that Wahl translates, not merely “I choose,” but “I choose by way of suffrages.” He has quoted Wahl wrongly in the very thing that is in question. I am fully persuaded that it is through pre-occupation, as it may happen to everyone; but it is important to know that Wahl says, “I choose by way of suffrage,” without an s at the end of the word. The reason for this is quite simple, and the difference is immense. The suffrage is always the suffrage of the person who chooses, so that one could not translate, I choose by way of suffrages, with an s, since it would be

choosing by other suffrages besides my own; whereas, if I say, I choose by way of suffrage, in the singular, it is my act in view; it is a question of myself. It is always the suffrage of the person who is the subject of the verb “to choose,” which is spoken of. The word translated by “chose” means to stretch out the hand, and those who did choose stretched out their own hands, and not the hands of others. If anyone wishes to confine himself to etymology, although the verb, like so many others, has lost its etymological sense, the only sense which can be given to it is, “the apostles chose by stretching out their hand.”

The thing in question is not to know if the word retains the sense of suffrage (although in its general use, it has lost it) but, admitting the sense of choosing by way of suffrage, we must know by whose suffrage it is. Then I answer, by the suffrage of him who chooses, and of him alone. As for the case of 2 Corinthians 8:19, it is exactly the same thing. The churches “chose,” but then the “churches” are in the same relation to the verb, as Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:23. The churches, like Paul and Barnabas, did not choose by the suffrages of other persons, but by their own suffrages. This passage in 2 Corinthians entirely confirms this interpretation, which, after all, is the only reasonable or possible one. I do not here exclude the idea of hands being lifted up; but this I say, that the hands lifted up, if there were any, according to the form of the word, were the hands of the apostles. Moreover, I do not think that Mr. Rochat would dispute it now.

Mr. Rochat knows as well as I do, that the use of the participle, instead of the past tense, makes no difference. Hence, in the only passage where the choice

of elders is mentioned, the word shews us that the church did not choose herself, but that it was the apostles who chose for the church. The only epistles which speak of the qualification of elders and of deacons are addressed, not to churches, but to persons who in a special way represented the apostles. These two circumstances are more than extraordinary, if the rule of the word was that the churches were to choose their elders. Add to this that Titus had been sent to a great distance in order to establish them, as the apostle had commanded him to do—him, I say, and not the churches which existed in these localities.76 Mr. Rochat says that I make a distinction unknown to everybody between elders and pastors. All I can reply to that is, that it is astonishing how grave and learned men can remain so entirely shut up in their own ideas. Nearly the better half of the Reformed Church has made this distinction; all the Presbyterians make it; and our brother has only to make a short excursion in the Canton de Neufchatel, and he will find in each parish Mr.——, elder, who is not the pastor at all.77 Farel, Knox, the reformers in France, etc., were not men to be despised in their generation. By the way, does my memory fail me, when I say that Farel was never ordained? It is certain that at Geneva a poor artisan had begun to distribute the Lord’s supper, and was banished for it. Faith is worth many ordinations of men. On the other hand, I do not quote these facts as authority to rest upon, but solely in reply to our brother, who says (p. 51), that he has thought, until now, that everybody was agreed in thinking that these two charges were the same. For my part, the Bible suffices me.

Mr. Rochat has only referred to a part of the passages in Exodus and Deuteronomy. Although they are not very important with respect to this subject, I will say that in Exodus 18, it is Jethro who proposes the thing to Moses, and that it is Moses who chooses. From what is said in Deuteronomy 1:13, it is Moses who proposes the thing to the people, saying, “Take ye.” The people answer, “The thing which thou hast spoken is good,” etc. Then Moses says, “So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you,” etc.

Our brother is very much astonished also that I said, As to the service of tables, the choice was granted to the church, because the church supplied the tables, as the choice also was reserved for God, when God supplied the gift. He asks if God does not supply the gifts for a deacon. Everything is confounded here, because our brother has not understood the use of the word gift. All the things that we possess are gifts of God undoubtedly; but, in the word, the use of this expression is specially connected with certain gifts, which result from the glory of Christ, as Son of man. “He gave gifts for men.” “He gave some apostles,” etc. “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.” “Covet earnestly the best gifts,” etc.

Now the charge of deacon was not one of these gifts, but a charge which had to do with the care of temporal things. A person was the deacon or the servant of the church. Certain qualities were necessary, to be a deacon, but this charge was in nowise one of the gifts mentioned in the list which is left us, Eph. 4 and 1 Cor. 12. A man might very well possess a special gift of service, in a more general sense, without being officially a deacon, but the things intrusted to deacons were

temporal, and they were intrusted to them by the brethren. As to those who possessed gifts, the things which were intrusted to them were spiritual; they came directly from God; and those men were immediately responsible towards the Lord in their service. They were servants or deacons of Jesus, in things which were spiritual, and not servants of the church in things which were temporal. But here comes out the whole thought of our brother. “The church,” he says (p. 55), “ought to have named elders, not only because it paid them, but also because it intrusted to them something much more precious than its money, namely, the souls of the faithful which composed it.” I only ask where such a thought is to be found in the word as this, that the church intrusts to the elders the souls which compose it?

As to the phrase which astonishes our brother, I maintain it in all its force; and I see great perfection in the ways of the Spirit of God as to this. As regards the difference which exists between the elder and the pastor, I say that the pastorate was a gift of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4), whereas the charge of elder was not one. This charge was established by men in the church, according to God undoubtedly, but it was an institution connected with government, and not a gift from above, although certain gifts and certain qualities were necessary for those who were named elders. I said that the gift of shepherding the flock of God, in one way or in another, was necessary or suitable for them, because it is shewn by the first epistle to Timothy that the elders who laboured in word and teaching are distinguished from the other elders. Peter speaks of the elders in a very vague manner, calling himself an elder, and

contrasting them with all the younger, so that it would be difficult to suppose a choice.

I admit this, that on certain occasions the disciples did take resolutions in common. In the case of the disputes about circumcision, which the apostle Paul could not settle, the brethren at Antioch agreed to refer to the decision of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. If our brother, Mr. Rochat, likes to quote this as an instance of a decision on the part of the church, he is quite free to do so. For my part, I see the incapacity in which the church was to decide anything on the subject; they agreed to refer this question to a superior authority. Except the answer from the apostles and elders, with the church, to the question which had thus been proposed to them, all the other cases (excluding what was done before the coming down of the Holy Spirit), only relate to deacons and to pecuniary aid. Let brethren take resolutions in common when circumstances arise, I have nothing Jn-the world to say against it, provided their direction be from God; but this, I repeat, that I see nothing in the word that resembles the decision of a majority. It is evident that, if the church is in a bad state, the majority will probably decide wrong, and nothing can prove that the Holy Spirit is with the majority. It is merely a human means of settling an affair. In matters of arrangement one may very well consult what suits the greater number; but, as regards moral things, the number is of no moment.

Our brother (p. 59) returns to the subject of gifts. He asks if the gifts connected with the charge of elder did not come directly from God. When it is a question of governing one’s household, and one’s own children (1

Tim. 3:4, 5), it is quite a different thing from gifts, in the scriptural sense of the expression.

Mr. Rochat (p. 60) insists on the answer he gave in his first pamphlet to this remarkable fact, that every direction about elders is given to Titus and to Timothy, and never to the churches. He remarks that Paul says to Timothy (1 Tim. 3:15), “These things write I unto thee … that thou mayest know [not, ‘how thou oughtest to behave thyself,’ but] how one ought to behave oneself.” I take a similar case. My son is chosen councillor of state, and I write to him to explain how one ought to behave oneself in the affairs of the state. This shews, according to Mr. Rochat’s mode of reasoning, that every citizen may, at any time, exercise the functions of councillor of state, because I told my son how one ought to behave oneself. I confess I do not see where the force of that argument lies.

The author adds to his thought, which is also mine, that we must not go in advance of the gifts of God. “When God,” he says (p. 61), “sends elders and deacons, I will not have them to be tacitly owned, but to be established through their being recognised by a regular vote of the church.” But, first of all, in the case of establishing elders and deacons, it is supposed that all is in order, the very thing that always remains to be proved; and if even it were supposed that all is in order in the church, it would still remain to be proved, that it has a right to establish elders by a regular vote, as Mr. Rochat says. This has not been done, but quite the contrary. It ever remains true, that what is presented to us in the word, is the choosing of elders by the apostles; their establishment by the delegates of Paul; directions for

those same delegates, and an absolute silence on this subject in all that is written directly to the churches.

I will point out here a principle, which is expressed twice in Mr. Rochat's pamphlet, with a very slight difference: where the word has determined nothing, man is free. The essential thing is to follow its spirit (p. 66). There is no principle more dangerous than that one. Were it followed, all kinds of innovations might be introduced into an assembly, and imposed on the brethren by the vote of a majority. It is true that the Holy Spirit leads us according to the spirit of the word in cases where we do not find at first a positive text; for the Spirit has not abandoned the church. But to say, in such a case, that man is free, is a horrid principle. It is this especially that I dread in the system of dissent. Man, the flesh, its rights, are constantly put in place of the Holy Spirit.

As to the article on the ruin of the dispensation, I have replied to it while considering that on the unity of the church. Here is what I have to say now about women (p. 86). Whenever brethren meet as an assembly before God, the women are to remain silent; it is a moral ordinance of the word. Discipline is not connected with organisation, but with the presence of Jesus, where two or three are gathered together in His name. The Holy Spirit necessarily exercises that discipline, wherever He acts; for He is holy, and He governs in the church. The author's answer about the refusal anyone might make to join the disciples, is no answer at all. The church was not yet manifested at the time of Joseph of Arimathasa (p. 90). To belong to the assembly a person must have been baptised, and those who had not been baptised could not be owned as Christians. As for those who had

been baptised, they had thereby publicly joined the Christians. As for the imposition of hands, if it were only given to recommend to the grace of God someone who is about to go forth for the Lord's work, I see nothing to hinder it; but if it be to make a minister, as people say, or to give a right to the exercise of ministry, it is a positive infringement upon the sovereignty of God.

## Romans 11—The Seven Churches in Asia

I thank God we are at last getting but of these details. Romans 11 must occupy us for a moment. This expression is blamed, "The Jews have been cut off." It is evident that here the word "Jews" must be taken in the sense of the Jewish dispensation. Is it denied that God has put an end to that dispensation, by adding what is called "the election "to the church (Rom. 11:7), by cutting off or dispersing the unbelieving, and by interrupting His dealings with the nation, although it be kept, according to His counsels, for future blessing? In like manner, it is not a question of cutting off all the Gentiles: but God will equally put an end to this dispensation, which (the Jews having been set aside) is characterised as "salvation unto the Gentiles." This is, after all, what Mr. Rochat himself now acknowledges. I return to this infinitely solemn truth, which I have at heart to place before the eyes of Christians, namely, that you, Gentiles, have been put under a responsibility analogous to that of the Jews, that you have failed as they have, and that you will be cut off as they have been. I do not mean that the judgments of God will reach all the faithful individually; but the whole system in which you now are, and of which you form a part, will be judged and destroyed, as the Jewish system was.

One thing has greatly struck me in our brother's reply; it is the manner in which he lays stress on inexact words and expressions, while he keeps silence on the most solemn warnings of the word, on all I said of Jude, of the first epistle of John, and of all that is addressed to the Christians of the universal church. I think this a bad sign. It was on reading over my last tract to see if I had considered certain points, that I was struck with the great number of important passages which are not touched upon in Mr. Rochat's answer. And yet these passages must act, either for good or for evil, on the conscience of Christians, according to their true or false application. I entreat my brethren with all my might, and before the Lord, to weigh these passages of scripture. If they deign to read what is said on them in "Further Developments," etc., it might at least direct their attention to these subjects. I do not speak now in the sense of controversy, but that their conscience may be kept under the influence of these solemn warnings of God, and that they may judge the existing state of things, according to the light of the word.

I have still something to say on the book of Revelation, because this may be the means of fresh light to my brethren. If we examine closely the seven churches of Asia, we shall find much more than promises or threats addressed to certain local churches. When it is said, in Revelation 3:10, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from [it should be ' out of] the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly"—it is evident that the application of these words goes much farther than the then-existing church of Philadelphia, or any other particular church. For the

hour of temptation has not yet come: and Philadelphia and its church have been for ages forgotten. That there was a partial accomplishment at Philadelphia, I do not deny; but I cannot doubt that there is a promise for the last days in favour of those who have kept the word of the patience of Jesus. I do not deny the judgment of the particular churches, although I do not see their restoration; but in order to understand what is said to the churches of the Revelation, we must go further than the judgment of those churches. As to Laodicea, we shall find that the threat of the Lord to spue it out of His mouth is unconditional; because it was lukewarm, it was to be spued out. It is true that the Lord is long-suffering; that Jesus stands at the door and knocks; but it is in order that he that opens may sup with Him: this is an individual promise. It is not added, as to other churches called to repentance, “or else I will come”; for the threat was absolute. In the Revelation, the coming of the Saviour is always supposed to be near. The Spirit forbids sealing the words of that prophecy, “for the time is at hand.” And that is the true force of the text commonly given thus, “And he that is filthy, let him be filthy still”; 78 that is, let him that is filthy, remain filthy; it is too late to change: every one remains what he is. The judgment of the churches always refers to the coming of Jesus. Each one of them is supposed to remain until His return, and each one also presents a moral state which undergoes the judgment of the Son of man by the Spirit —judgment which will be executed at the coming of the Lord. If the return of Jesus has been delayed according to man’s thoughts and in fact, in a certain sense, this is explained to us by the word (Matt. 25:2; Rev. 3). Scripture always speaks in view of His coming as being at hand. Meanwhile the moral state of certain

assemblies of that day, and the judgment pronounced on them by the Spirit, serve as a warning and a specimen for the church in general, and apply also, by the Spirit of God, to the forms of evil which the church would put on up to the end. These are “the things which are.” In “the things which are to come” there is no mention of the church as being on earth.

But I close. I pass over in silence the comparative picture of the two systems, and the contrast which is presented in it between Mr. Darby and the word, because I have discussed all the subjects if contains. That there is a serious opposition between Mr. Rochat’s views and mine (in the spirit of the things more than in the details), I fully agree. I believe that he has substituted, for the presence of the Spirit of God in the government of the church here below, certain rites and ordinances of churches, the greater part of which cannot be justified by the word. I believe that his views prevent the conscience of the church from being reached by the conviction of its responsibility and of its sin, in that it has not manifested the glory of Christ here below. When Mr. Rochat speaks of the practical consequences of what he calls my system, it is easy for him to pronounce a judgment. People may have exposed the apostles, because the enemy had raised a tumult; one may shut out the truth, because the opposition to that truth has caused trouble.79 Our brother alludes to what took place at Geneva. But it remains to be proved if all the fault is with the principles. May it not be in part with those who are opposed to them? I believe I have said all that is necessary —no doubt, with much weakness, for I have gone through much bodily

suffering; but I think I have touched upon all that concerns the conscience of the church.

## Conclusion

And now, if I am asked what the children of God have to do in the present circumstances of the church, my answer is very simple. They ought to meet in the unity of the body of Christ outside the world. That is a need which is pretty generally felt, a principle of all importance in these days of falling away, a principle which he who is guided by the Holy Spirit will not fail to find in the word. Whenever it once has been found, obedience becomes a duty of the conscience; and the more light a person has, the more deeply this will be received. To act according to his conscience, according to the word, a Christian only needs faith—that energetic principle which only looks to the will of God, and never to circumstances or to difficulties. The consciousness that we shall be preserved from the judgment which will fall upon Christendom will give seriousness, humbleness, firmness to our walk. Let us remember that "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

As regards details, take heed to the promise of the Lord, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," Matt. 18:20.80 That is what the heart needs that loves God and is tired of the world. Reckon upon that promise of the Lord, you children of God, disciples of Jesus. If two or three of you meet together in His name He will be there. It is there that God has put His name, as of old in His temple at Jerusalem. You need nothing else but to meet together thus in faith. God is in your midst; you will see His glory.

How greatly has not that God of love blessed us by the simplicity of His intercourse with us! Do not think that you have to build spiritual palaces, in order that God may come and dwell in your midst. If two or three are gathered together in His name, it may be a poor tent, but God is there. Do not pretend to erect palaces when you have only the materials for huts.

Act in simplicity with what you have; if you have the Lord Himself, you have all you need. “Whosoever hath, unto him shall more be given.” Remember also, that when the disciples came together, it was to break bread, Acts 20:7. “Upon the first day of the week,” it is written, “when the disciples came together to break bread,” etc. 1 Corinthians 11 shews us the same thing, “When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.” There was an abuse of the Supper, and the apostle was correcting this abuse. But we can see that the object of their coming together into one place was to eat the Lord’s supper.

It will always be a precious thing to the disciple to remember the love of Him, who, “having loved his own which were in the world … loved them unto the end.” If God saves us from a general ruin, it is so much the more touching for our souls. At the beginning, the disciples used to take the Lord’s supper every day in their houses. If God sends us or raises up among us someone who can feed our souls, let us receive him with joy and thankfulness from God, according to the gift that has been vouchsafed to him, and let us honour the Lord thus in His gift. Let us also ourselves seek to bear testimony in love to those who are round us, that they may escape

the wrath to come. If God raises up from the midst of those who are gathered together a brother who is able to exhort or exercise some other gift, let him do it with simplicity for the good of all, watching much over his own heart, lest it should become a snare to him. It is always dangerous for the soul to be put forward: a man does not cease to be a simple brother, because he has a gift which makes him the servant of all.

Never make any regulations; the Holy Spirit will guide you, if you rest on Him, and if you rely upon God who is ever faithful. Seek to be imbued with the spirit as well as the letter of the word; and act in each case under the direction of God, always trusting His word. He will know how to raise up helps, if it be necessary: only believe.

As to discipline, remember that cutting off is the extreme resource. The children of a family may be obliged, according to the wisdom of their Father, to refuse all intercourse with one of their brethren; but does not the heart understand in what spirit this is to be done? To preserve the holiness of the Lord's table is a positive duty. We owe it to Christ Himself, Cases may present themselves, where we repel with fear the manifestation of sin (Jude 23); but, on the other hand, beware of a judicial spirit, as of fire in your house. The Christian who knows Himself best, and who loves most, will never fail to exercise discipline when he is obliged to do it; but he will do it, as on the part of Christ's heart that has been grieved— the heart of Him who ever loves, and with the sense that the flesh is also in himself. Moreover, if it be a question of excommunication, all ought to take a part in it, not because they have a right to it (for what would be the spirit of a child who could insist on his right to take a part in the exclusion of one

of his brothers!), but because the conscience of all must be purified, and because the whole assembly must be, through this act, separated from a sin which demands the putting away.

If God raises up in your midst persons who watch over souls, who, jealous of seeing them respond to the grace of Christ, feed them on that grace, and plead both for them and with them, it is a precious gift from the Lord.

With respect to the distribution of the Supper, the difficulties are imaginary. As the apostle says of the woman, nature also can teach us here. The Supper must be celebrated in a suitable way; this every Christian would feel. If you are not numerous, and you are placed in the same circumstances, all is easy. If there is a large assembly, it has not been formed in a moment; and there are always to be found in it persons who are well known and respected by brethren: those persons may break the bread. As to an essential difference as a right, there is none; but it is a duty towards God to celebrate, in a suitable way, an institution of Christ, so precious to the church. It is the flesh alone that would make used of the ordinances of the Lord to exalt itself above other brethren, and to arrogate some importance to itself; and the flesh is always bad.

If God raises up several brethren who feed His flock, and who labour (though with little gift, perhaps, but in love, and in a sense of responsibility, and therefore of humility, as those will always have who are truly sent of the Lord), let them seek to help each other in their labours, to pray together on the subject, and to profit by the counsel one of another. This confidence is very precious; and he that is humble and truly seeks the good

of souls will always be most happy to profit thereby. This will never take from us our individual responsibility, but will often help us to fulfil it for the good of the church and for the glory of Christ. At the same time, let each one remember that, if God uses one of His children to labour in the church, it is that he may be (although free with respect to others, and responsible to Christ), the servant of all. Whoever departs from this position abandons both his duty and his privilege. Let us always remember that it is God's will that we should be dependent upon Him, and that every effort to free ourselves from that dependence upon Him, who is our only safeguard and our stay, is but the work of the flesh, which would have its ease in the world.

Finally, I close by presenting again that which is at the root of the whole question—the responsibility of the church. In general, discussions descend to details; here it is the contrary. The details have served to bring into evidence the fact, that there was a serious principle in question, a fundamental principle for judging soundly about the church, its state and its affairs. Is the church responsible for the state in which it is found—yes or no? Until now, the system of dissent denies this responsibility. If our brethren who follow this system come to acknowledge this, it will be a step more in advance, that they will have made—a subject of joy, not only for brethren here below, but for heaven also. At the commencement of the revival dissent was honoured of God, because they acted faithfully in separating themselves from the world, and in bearing witness to the sanctification of the church of God and to the duty of being a light before men. When they sought to lay down as a principle their capacity to re-establish things on the

primitive footing, their present weakness was soon manifested. People may perhaps tell me, Weakness will soon be manifested among you, who hold this language towards us. I fully acknowledge it, for the difference between us does not consist in this, that we are the strongest, but in this, that we own our weakness and our incapacity.

Let us seek the gathering of brethren in love; let us profit by whatever God has vouchsafed to us; and let us obey in all that concerns our individual conduct, distinguishing between this obedience, and the pretension of affecting that which requires a higher power than what we possess. The gathering of brethren in love, and their practical separation from the world, are the two great principles of blessing. With respect to our comparative state, let us be humbled before God about it, and let us feel that we are responsible before Him for the state in which we are found.

Let us remember that it is not a question of power, when we examine the question of responsibility. This is a principle which every Christian should admit concerning man as a sinner. He is responsible for the state in which he is, although he is, of himself, incapable of getting out of it. He is responsible for the actual evil in which he walks. So it is with the church. Hence, it is always our duty to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well. If we have not learnt to do well, we ought, at least, to cease to do evil; we ought, at least, to abandon that which our conscience condemns. God will thereupon teach us to do well. He that is faithful to leave the evil, concerning which his conscience is enlightened, will not be long before finding light to go on farther in the path of good, for God is faithful. All true union is founded on

faithfulness in separating oneself from the evil which is known. Without that, union is only a mixture of good and evil, a union which Satan likes with all his heart and which God detests. From the time sin entered into the world God is gathering round Himself those whom He separates from the evil that exists, by acting on their conscience by His Spirit; and this extends to every evil, for God's judgment extends to it. The object of God is union, but He cannot unite Himself with evil, and He cannot unite us unto Himself without separating us from the evil in which we are. This is true as a principle of life for the whole conduct of Christians. "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." As for the judgment of God on the general state of the dispensation, it is from the mouth of God that we must learn it.

62 Geneva, 1843.

63 The Fifty-sixth Circular, containing a discourse, published separately, under the title, "Geneva and Oxford."

64 Such are the very words of the author of the discourse, "Geneva and Oxford," p. 5.

65 According to Ephesians 4:11, 12—a passage quoted against us.

66 Also Mr. Rochat tells us elsewhere: "The signs of the times announce the approach of His glorious kingdom." Therefore, the apostasy and the falling away are things which closely concern us, since they are to precede this glorious reign.

67 I am somewhat surprised that Mr. Rochat says (p. 21), that “the churches” [dissenting assemblies] received every Christian. It is well known that there were several which only admitted to the Supper those who formed part of an organised church.

68 I have consented to lay aside the word “apostasy,” because I do not attach myself to words, provided the truth be admitted. One has shouted victory, but it has been a mistake. I think that that expression is thoroughly applicable, according to its scriptural sense, to the state of things that we see around us. I consent to abandon it, in order to render more easy the discussion of these subjects with such as are sincere, because, in fact, the falling away which will take place at the end is a more open falling away, more undisguised. But the word of God applies this term to a moral and real abandonment of the true principles of Christianity and to the men who, while they call themselves Christians, act under the influence of Satan (1 Tim. 4), who corrupts everything which he cannot hinder. This abandonment of the true principles of Christianity, by the very persons who pretend never to have abandoned it, is called apostasy in the word; and it is most important that this should be understood, in order that the outward form of Christianity may no longer deceive the simple, but that they may fully know that the apostasy is none the less real for being hidden.

Mr. Rochat says (p. 22), that scripture places the moment of the apostasy at the time of the appearing of the Antichrist. He mistakes; scripture says nothing of the kind. The passage quoted only says, that the day of the Lord will not come unless the apostasy have first come and the man of sin have been revealed, etc. But

the falling away may take place long before the revelation of the man of sin.

In the “Abridged History of the Church of Christ,” the author of which I need not name, we find a chapter with this title: “Apostasy Consummated.” I quote a passage from it (vol. 1, p. 121): “what progress that unfortunate church had made, in the eighth century, in the path of error and perdition! After having for a long time followed the instructions of the Holy Ghost, such as it possessed in the epistle especially addressed to them, at length tired of watching, praying, combating, weary of bearing the yoke of the good Shepherd, it relaxed by degrees from its pristine faithfulness. At first it had neglected, then afterwards it had abandoned, the word of truth. Instead of remaining a particular church, as it originally was, it had wished to become generally catholic, and had insensibly exalted itself to that degree, that it aspired to universal dominion, drawing away with it all the West in its apostasy.”

Is then the word “apostasy” more terrible under my pen than in that work? All the West has been drawn away into the apostasy. It is said, that the truth is only contested when it becomes important.

Again, the author of the same work applies Romans 11 to the cutting off of that church. “The moment is approaching,” he adds in a note to volume 1, page 122, “when that adulterous church, which has become high minded, will be cut off for ever.”

I would only add two remarks here. First, I have not made a wrong use of the word “apostasy,” since an author who well knows how to write his mother tongue, uses it in a more positive way than I do. The church of

Rome acknowledges the Trinity; it owns that Christ is the Lord, that He is both God and Man, as well as other fundamental truths; and yet it is the consummated apostasy, because it has first neglected and afterwards abandoned the word of truth because it has become high minded, etc. Then next Romans 11 applies to this state of things, to all that has been led away by the church of Rome. Secondly, the author goes farther than I. I do not believe that the apostasy is consummated, as I have already said elsewhere. On the other hand, if the author extends the application of Romans 11 beyond individuals at Rome, or the church of Rome itself, then you must take the apostle according to his own expressions. “I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am die apostle of the Gentiles.” Besides, I am persuaded that, ere long, the Romish church will put an end to this difficulty, at least within the limits of the fourth empire. At all events, the whole of the West has been drawn away. The author leads us to perceive the consequences of the unbelief by quoting Romans 11.

69 If any thing can be added, it is a sign or outward bond, which rendered them members and gave them officially a right in the society; that is what is found in baptism.

70 I do not attach myself to the word “society” —it is an expression of Mr. Rochat; but die thing is most important, as may be seen in John 17. The Lord prays that those who believe may be one, that the world may believe. The inhabitants of the Canton de Vaud form a Society, because, being all born Vaudois (though there be different parishes), they are all attached to a common centre; they possess common rights; they have charges filled by men who work for the common interests of the

country. They are all Vaudois. That unity is felt and known, although it might be difficult to present in a visible way the bond which unites one Vaudois to another Vaudois. Thus it was in the church at the beginning; all were Christians, born again, fellow-citizens of a heavenly country; there were charges by functions, which had their sphere of activity in the whole body, namely, apostles, prophets, teachers.. Though there were churches, as in the Canton de Vaud there are parishes, Christians formed a society, as the Vaudois form one, because there was internal unity, manifested, maintained, and developed by charges. There were local charges; but there were also charges and gifts which were for the whole body (as the Council of State in the Canton de Vaud); and the apostles, die prophets, etc., did not any more belong to a local church, than the Council of State in die Canton de Vaud belongs to a particular parish.

71 Rather, the power and bond of unity. Christ is the centre.

72 God has proposed to Himself two great objects with regard to a Christian: the one, to save him; the other, to manifest in him His own glory. These two objects will be fully attained when the Christian is in glory. Meanwhile, his salvation is certain, because God is true. But, on the other hand, it thus becomes the duty of such as enjoy this salvation, to be on earth the living witnesses of God’s glory, by the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in them. It is the same with the church: it is saved;* but it is its duty and its privilege to manifest here below the glory of Him who saved it, and who dwells in it by the Holy Spirit. It is here that the responsibility of such as are saved finds its place. The rigid Calvinist only sees

the accomplished salvation of the Church—an infinitely precious truth, the results of which in heavenly glory can never fail; but he does not see the establishment of the church here below—and that by God Himself—as depositary of the glory of God, and under the responsibility of man. The Arminian, on the contrary, concludes from this responsibility of Christians the uncertainty of their salvation, thus weakening the counsels of God, the eternal efficacy of the work of Christ, and all the sense and force of the seal of the Spirit, who would be bearing witness to an error, if after all we were not eternally saved.

* Note to translation—It is more exact to say, when individuals are saved, because the church is looked at as a new creation. But the general principle of the statement has remained here.

There is a responsibility which results from grace, from the position which it has made for us. If God has adopted me for His child, I am bound to walk as a child, without questioning whether I shall always be a child. Thus God may Himself secure the accomplishment of His glory in His elect, and outwardly also by their means; or He may leave the manifestation of His glory to their faithfulness as His children. All these suppositions will be realised, the glory will be fully manifested in His elect, when Christ shall have glorified them. Then also will they fully glorify Him, as the angels do. But, in the meantime, God has entrusted His glory here below to the church, as He had of old entrusted it to the Jews. Christians are faithful to this responsibility, by the Spirit who dwells in them, and who acts with efficacy, if He be not grieved. This therefore concerns the whole church, because the Holy Ghost dwells as the one Spirit in the

Church. And although the evil may begin by one individual only, belonging to one particular church, it is here a question of principles which corrupt the whole lump in general, such, for instance, as a Judaizing spirit.

I deem it important to notice here that all the epistles which speak of ruin, of false principles which are the occasion for judgment, do not speak of a church, but of Christians in general—of the state of that which is called Christendom.

73 I speak here without making any allusion to questions and discussions between baptists and pædobaptists.

74 Note to translation.—Baptism is not admission to the body. That is by baptism by one Spirit. But the doctrine of the ruin, or the house, was not distinctly brought out then. The general reasoning is perfectly just.

75 See also 1 Corinthians 1:10.

76 If Mr. Rochat wishes to find examples and arguments on this point, he may consult “Poli Synopsis Crit,” on this passage.

77 See also the “Confession of Faith of the Reformed Church of France,” Article 29, etc.; “Confession of Faith of the Churches of Switzerland,” chapter 18.

78 Note to translation.—In the French translation it is, he that is defiled, let him defile himself yet; he that is sanctified, sanctify himself still.

79 I am ready to revert to the circumstances which have happened at Geneva, if love lead me to do it; and I am fully persuaded that impartial persons would be somewhat astonished to hear the narrative of these circumstances, and would perhaps judge very differently

from what they have done. But I greatly prefer leaving all these things to the judgment of God.

80 It has been asked why this portion of the word has been taken rather than others to be applied to the present time. It is astonishing to what a degree pre-occupation of the mind blinds the judgment. Do not people see that this is a promise which only requires the faithfulness of Him who has promised? Where two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus, the word receives its accomplishment. It is evident that the rules that Paul was giving to Timothy and to Titus are very different, and that they suppose an altogether special mission.

# Remarks On The Pamphlet Of Mr. F. Olivier

Entitled, “An Essay On The Kingdom Of God;

Followed By A Rapid Examination Of The Views Of Mr. John Darby”81

## Preface

The following pages require two words of preface.

Firstly. Whatever may be the source of this opposition, I am convinced that the pamphlet of Mr. Francois Olivier is an effort against the truth. Its tendency is to hinder simple brethren from acting in faith. I have therefore freely expressed my thoughts with regard to it.

Secondly. Although I do not doubt that the substance of what is found in these pages is solid, it is, perhaps, well to warn him who may glance over them, that they do not pretend to furnish anything but a few rapid observations on the views of Mr. Olivier.

I received Mr. Olivier’s pamphlet on Monday evening, and have had to answer it without giving up my other occupations, and during a journey I have taken this week to Vevey, in order to be able to give the manuscript to be printed before leaving for France.

A journey of a few weeks will detain me in that country and would consequently have hindered me from taking up the matter.

## Remarks

The life that we lead down here is a very mingled one; and we must keep very near to God in order to preserve the soul in equilibrium, and to rejoice in the very things which would naturally pain the heart, as seeing them in connection with our Father's will. Returning from a journey, in which I had been able to enjoy the happiness of the brethren assembled in peace, finding God near to them and in their midst, where I tasted the joy that one experiences in seeing many souls awakened and numerous conversions, sharing the joy of those who labour in it more faithfully than oneself, and seeing them happy in their work because God has blessed and is still blessing them—returning thus from places, where, having laboured oneself, one is happy to see the brethren again in peace, walking better even in one's absence than in one's presence, I stumble upon a pamphlet which sees nothing in all this but "disorder, misery, and premature teachers": a pamphlet, which pronounces upon the brethren judgments that reveal the thoughts of its author, much more than they depict the character of those whom he blames.

The condition of many persons at the present time brings to my mind the curse pronounced upon him who leans upon an arm of flesh, Jer. 17. "He shall not see when good cometh." I pity them with all my heart. We are poor, weak, yea, very weak. Our faith, or rather our lack of faith, often puts us to shame; and I doubt not, alas! that we often do things that are not according to the wisdom of God. When God, in His grace, gives us to be conscious of it, we have to humble ourselves: notwithstanding we are happy, for we walk with God; and He, in His great mercy, blesses us—unworthy as we

are He has permitted us in our little measure (a very little measure, I confess, but according to that which He has given us) to work with God. But I have already said too much of this; I act as a fool. It will be thought that, because I am happy in the blessing of God, I seek to commend myself.

How can I rejoice in pamphlets, which, composed by the sad wisdom of men, will not have the foolishness of faith? This is how it is. Even when done in a spirit of strife, those who write them are forced to propagate the substance of the truth: and they themselves help on the work, while they condemn the persons who follow the truth heartily and joyfully. As for the faith and joy which accompany them: God has “hidden these things from the wise and prudent and has revealed them unto babes”; and, “there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last”—for such has been the Father’s good pleasure. But the last, like the first, are forced to help on the spread of the truth, for such is the good pleasure of God, who will not allow His Church to slumber in these last days. If we will be “the last” when God is working, we have but ourselves to blame. Must God stop in His work of blessing because man will not go forward? God, in His goodness, forbid it!

Without approving every sentence or the spirit of the whole, let people examine the pamphlet of this minister, Mr. Francois Olivier, from page 52 to 69, and what evils —“irremediable evils” —he is speaking of in detail. Now he wishes us to call this state of things “the kingdom.” And he will not have us call the outward kingdom of God “the church.” Be it so. It is at least the general condition of things. Let it be called kingdom, as he wishes, or with others the visible church, the thing is admitted and is

according to him “irremediable.” This is serious. For one could then truly say of the church, with which, according to Mr. Olivier, the kingdom was confounded, what God says of Israel in Jeremiah 2:21, “yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed.” “But,” says Mr. Olivier, “I must continue to repeat, it is in the kingdom, and not in the church, that this corruption began and increases.” Then I find in page 19, “Here one sees the kingdom of God is confounded with the church”; and, page 20, “the church is itself the spiritual kingdom, in which, and over which, Christ reigns”; and, in page 23, “as long as this was the case, I repeat, the church and the kingdom in their visible state here below would have been but one and the same thing.”

According to Mr. Olivier, that continued until some church ceased to receive all the Christians in its locality, or admitted into its bosom persons whose profession was evidently not real. Up to that time the church and the kingdom had been confounded; but it was during this period that the evil began. It was while the apostles were addressing all professors as saints, that heresies and corruption began, and that antichrists “went out,” which alone manifested that they were not “of them “: so that the corruption began, the mystery of iniquity was at work, when the church and the kingdom were confounded.

The evil began in that assembly, which, according to Mr. Olivier, was at the same time the church and the kingdom. He wishes us to believe that the church cannot become corrupt (p. 25); he admits that it may be enfeebled and may suffer from the condition of the kingdom (p. 68). If he means that God will keep true believers to the end, he does not think, I suppose, to

give us fresh light by telling us so. Substantially, therefore, the only result of his book is, that he admits that the existing state of things (believers, as believers, excepted) is an “impure Babylon,” “without remedy.” “It is a horrible corruption which must definitively end in the accomplishment of the mystery of iniquity, in a general apostasy, upon which the Lord will only have to cause His most terrible judgments to fall” (p. 68). Let us also remark that he justifies the application of the word apostasy to the state of things which has long existed (p. 65).

Mr. Olivier applies the passage, 1 Timothy 4:1-3, to religious forms destitute of life. The errors which are there pointed out “exactly concern superstitious practices.” We find (p. 67), that those who are guilty of them “have already apostatised.” In this catalogue of irremediable evils is found the state of the dissenting churches themselves, as also that of the primitive churches immediately after their formation (pp. 50, 56, etc.).

But there is another remark to be made here. We have seen that Mr. Olivier asserts that the church cannot become corrupt; it is in the kingdom and not in the church that this corruption arises and increases. The great thing is, that corruption and apostasy (according to 1 Tim. 4) do exist. Let them call it kingdom, or give it any name they will, provided that consciences are reached. Popery, Nationalism, and in many respects even Dissenters are infected by this corruption, all being in the kingdom; and this state of things is irremediable. I go farther, and I say that this corruption began in the church as well as in the kingdom, since it began by principles of evil and not by the apostasy of individuals—

by principles of evil among true Christians who formed what existed of the church upon earth.

My first witness for a part of this truth will be Mr. Olivier (page 46). “Another inevitable source of corruption is the sins of true Christians themselves.” Mr. Olivier will have it that this has acted upon the churches, or the kingdom. That may be; but at least the “source of corruption” was found in the true Christians who composed the church. But one may go still farther; for that which was a source of corruption was not only the sins of true Christians, but, yet more, Judaism. What overthrew Christianity was found in true Christians. The Galatians were not only a church; they were true disciples. Those who had come down from Jerusalem to Antioch are recognised by the apostles as belonging to them, although not authorised on their part. The Pharisees who blamed Peter for having eaten with the Gentiles were believers.

One sees many other examples of it. We find then, that the machinations of Satan among true Christians were the first and principal source of the evil. I admit that this may have been an occasion for the introduction of false brethren; but the corruption began in the church. It is in the church that we find it now, unless the most gross errors and superstitions, in which real Christians are found even according to Mr. Olivier, are not corruption. I say according to Mr. Olivier; for he admits that there are Christians in popery, in Nationalism, and elsewhere.

If, again, Mr. Olivier will not allow that true Christians, whose sins and whose errors, as we have seen, are an inevitable source of corruption, form the church, because in the sight of God the church will only be truly

gathered together in heaven at last, then I answer, that his reasoning is both false and absurd: false, because Timothy ought to know how to behave himself in the church of the living God, and certainly that was not in the church gathered in heaven—the body of Christ was increasing by joints of supply, and certainly that was not in heaven—absurd, for no one dreams of corruption being in heaven; and the reasonings of every man of good sense, and of the Bible, are occupied with the church upon earth. But if true Christians composed the church then there was in the church, according to Mr. Olivier, “an inevitable source of corruption” in the sins, and (shall I add according to the word of God?) in the errors which were found there: errors, which for a moment made Paul doubt that those who had adopted them were true Christians, Gal. 4:11, 20. So it is true that there is corruption at the present time in the church, for the sins and errors have been increasing from the commencement among true Christians, although God has often raised up some special lights in their midst. It was not necessary that all Christians should be corrupted to make it true that the corruption began in the church. It was sufficient that “there was an inevitable source of corruption” in those who formed part of it. That is what took place by Mr. Olivier’s own confession. But this is a fact, a truth of the greatest importance, because the church is found to be compromised in the corruption which has invaded the kingdom itself. Inevitable sources of this corruption were found there.

Mr. Olivier may try to persuade us that the sleep of the workmen was a legitimate rest, although the apostle tells us that those who sleep sleep in the night, but that

we who are of the day should watch. However that may be (for I leave this interpretation to consciences), it is certain that the first indications given us in the Bible of the evil which has invaded the outward kingdom, are pointed out as in the church itself; this is what gave rise to the introduction of false brethren who maintained these same principles, Gal. 2:4.

Dare I add, for my own part, that if there had not been such a want of clearness, equilibrium, and measure in the theories of that poor Mr. D., we should not, it is to be supposed, have possessed the description of calm, and moderate things that is contained in pages 50 to 69 of Mr. Olivier's pamphlet? One must have a forlorn hope to mount the breach first: prudent men no doubt follow in better order.

But I beg those who read Mr. Olivier's pamphlet to weigh well the state of things depicted in these pages, and to remember that, according to Mr. Olivier, all Christians, all members of the church of God upon earth, were found in it. I do not present them this mode of expression as the clearest; I do not consider that it is. I think that in spite of all his care Mr. Olivier has fallen into flagrant contradictions; and I have noticed some of them. But however that may be, weigh what is at the root of the matter and reflect, you Christians, what you have come to, if Mr. Olivier is right. Call this state of things, then, the kingdom, or whatever you please; this is what I ask you, what is the condition of things in which you are found and what will be the result?

Mr. Olivier has not, in fact, been able to deny the existing evil; he has only employed the resources of the French language and of his own mind, in order the

better to describe the state of things which exists under the name of Christianity.

But here is a frightful result of Mr. Olivier's system. "This horrible corruption, which must definitely end in the accomplishment of the mystery of iniquity, in a general apostasy, upon which the Lord will only have to cause His most terrible judgments to fall," that "unclean Babylon" to which Mr. Olivier has made us look, is the kingdom; it is the deplorable condition of the kingdom. But (p. 38) although those who are of the kingdom are not [all] of the church, "all those who are of the church are certainly of the kingdom." The kingdom contains a good number of persons who are not of the church, but, on the other hand, all the members of the church are in the kingdom and of the kingdom, according to Mr. Olivier. There they are then, spite of themselves, in that unclean Babylon: it is impossible to get out. They are, by the very establishment of things on God's part, shut up in that which is the sad object of His most terrible judgments. Being of the kingdom, they are of this Babylon and they cannot get out of it! Christ, being the King of the kingdom, is found to be the king of this unclean Babylon! I pity you who embrace such a system.

Such are the effects of what man calls moderation and prudence, and of the absence of faith in the testimony of God as to the state of things in which we are found, but from which we must come out when we have discovered what it is. Faith would have instinctively recoiled before such conclusions, and would have felt them in a moment. When people only seek human exactness, and to blame the sentiments of others, they but dig pits into which they fall themselves. I speak here only of reasonings.

I have employed conventional terms, perhaps, with a certain want of exactness in some respects, as to expression. I have sometimes, perhaps, because everyone does it, called the church, that which is not really the church; and Mr. Olivier has done so himself in this pamphlet. In so doing, I was much better understood. My aim was to reach the conscience; and this aim has been accomplished to a certain point, and, by the grace of God, will be so more and more. And here, in order to be exact, those who oppose plunge the church, true Christians (and not the church in the conventional sense of Christianity, but the church in the sense given to it by Mr. Olivier), into an irremediable state of corruption from which they cannot get out. They are not only within the enclosure in which this is found, but they form part of the thing itself which is in this condition; and, in order to make this more clear, we are informed that this corruption could not take its rise in the church, and, at the same time, that one inevitable source of this corruption is in the sins of those who compose the church.

The fact is, they have not dared to resist the truth, because it was too evident. The human mind, which always draws back before the consequences of faith, has meddled with it; and the most deplorable moral confusion results from man’s pretension to be exact. “If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise,” 1 Cor. 3:18.

As to all that we find between pages 74 and 105, without warranting all the details (what is said, for example, of the reign of Christ over the church, as the consequence of that which precedes; the definition of the first resurrection, etc.), one may say that it is, on the whole,

a clear and interesting setting forth of truths which are, it is known, very dear to us. It is only in their application by faith to conduct that they touch the question which occupies us; and, in this respect, all is wanting.

I will now take up the criticisms which bear upon the expressions and upon the use of Scripture terms, to see what confidence one can place in this spirit of human exactness. In almost every case in which Mr. Olivier has left the ordinary use of the controverted terms, I find mistakes.

First, Mr. Olivier wishes to make the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God the same thing. In some places this is true; just as the canton and the republic of Geneva are now the same thing. But if I were to try and identify the canton and the republic in history, I should only shew my ignorance.

The expression “kingdom of heaven” is only found in Matthew; and when the Spirit of God wishes to speak of what has already come, He always changes the expression, and says, “kingdom of God.” Thus in Romans 14:17, one would never find such an expression as this, “For the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink”; because, although the kingdom of heaven is necessarily the kingdom of God, the expression “kingdom of heaven” relates to an order of things in the dispensations of God, and alludes, I doubt not, as Mr. Olivier says, to Daniel 7. That is why this expression is found in Matthew—a gospel full of Jewish points of view—a gospel which devotes itself to shewing the accomplishment of the prophecies and of the promises made to the Jews. This is why it is always said, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand”: Jesus Himself said it,

while He says, “The kingdom of God is among you,” for the King was there; but it was not the kingdom of heaven whilst the King was upon earth. Since the exaltation of Jesus, this kingdom of heaven has taken a special character, on account of the rejection of the Jews for a time. And this is what is explained in Matthew 13; the rejection of the people having been proved at the end of chapter 12. Mr. Olivier is mistaken when he says that Peter (Acts 3) places the times of refreshing at another period. The rejection of this discourse put them off to another period, according to the counsels of God; but Peter said, “Be converted … that the times of refreshing may come.”

Besides, it is not true that the church is itself the spiritual kingdom; not one of the passages quoted by Mr. Olivier says so. The saints obey, it is true, but Christ is never called the King of the church. We come to God’s throne of grace. There is a single passage in the Revelation which might be quoted: “King of saints,”82 Rev. 15:4. But this passage is so doubtful that one can found nothing upon it. We find nothing in the word to bear out the thought that Christ exercises royal authority over the church, and the teaching of Matthew 13 renders this distinction important. Mr. Olivier does not pretend to apply here the passages from the Old Testament, such as King in Zion. In the New Testament he finds none. But then his theory of a spiritual kingdom and an outward kingdom, as two different spheres, falls to the ground. We have simply “the kingdom of heaven,” which is not the church at all. The church has no relation nor any contact with the kingdom, save that it exists down here in the field, over which the authority of

the kingdom is exercised. Later on, the church will reign with the Lord over that same field.

Hence, to speak of “corrupting the kingdom” (p. 25), “a pure kingdom,” is only confusion. “The kingdom becomes Babylon” (p. 69); all that is entirely contrary to Scripture. If anyone is king over Babylon, it will be the antichrist. We are to come out of Babylon; we cannot come out of the kingdom, in the sense in which we are in it, as, indeed, Mr. Olivier felt.

It is grievous to speak thus of the kingdom, as if it were a certain number of persons in such and such a condition. The kingdom of heaven is a government—a reign, if you will. The King is there; His authority is there. He bears for a long time with scandals in His kingdom; but His kingdom, His reign, cannot be Babylon. Do they wish to make Christ king over Babylon? Is this the exactness that they seek? It is true that the enemy works in the kingdom while men sleep, because they are put there under responsibility; and there you see the importance of using the word dispensation, that everybody understands, because it is only a question of man and his position when God has placed him under responsibility, while the kingdom, or the reign, embraces also the government of the King, the sovereignty of God Himself. The kingdom was “among” the Pharisees, because Christ was there; the kingdom was “at hand” when the apostles were going to give their testimony in Israel (Matt. 10:7). The church is never the kingdom, either pure or impure. The kingdom contains the King; and it is very inexact and grievous to speak of the corruption of the kingdom. Scandals are allowed in His kingdom, according to the sovereign counsels of God—scandals that the King will remove by

and by, when He takes to Him His great power and acts as King. It is because in truth the principles of the kingdom are always God's principles, that the apostle can say that "The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." And, for the same reason, the kingdom of God could be preached, although Satan might sow in the field over which this kingdom ruled. The church down here may be corrupted, because the flesh is found in those faithful who compose it; though the chastenings and the grace of God may preserve it for glory, where flesh and blood cannot enter.

Now, if we come to the church, it is indeed the body of Christ. But the word of God speaks of the church below, and calls the gathering together of believers down here the church, the house of God, in which one must learn to behave oneself, and where there is activity of ministry by which this body grows. I will not abandon this scriptural application of the word, because I admit that at last, through the faithfulness of God, all the church will be assembled above. The object (and it is a signal one) of this pamphlet which I am now answering is to destroy the idea of an assembly on earth, and of the responsibility of that assembly; but I have discussed these points in the Remarks on the State of the Church. I will only remark that Mr. Olivier contradicts the word in his reasonings. The national churches are not churches (it is difficult to avoid conventional terms), "seeing that they do not assemble together, and that the word church signifies 'assembly.'" (p. 52). But (pp. 116, 117) he says that my views about the church and the body of Christ are false, and contrary to the ideas of Scripture, as to the assembly of the church, since the earthly body of Christ would never be really gathered

together down here. Then there has never been any church upon earth, and, without reasoning (p. 35), "there has never been seen anywhere the least trace of any assembly that could be, or has been, named in the full and absolute sense of the word the church or the assembly of God." As to the full and absolute sense of the word, I do not know; as to the scriptural meaning, which is much more important, one can have no doubt. If Mr. Olivier means to inform us that all the elect have not been on the earth at the same time, it is trifling with serious truths. Who needs to know it? But "the Lord added to the church" not to a church, or to an outside kingdom, "those who should be saved." And Timothy was learning how he ought to behave himself "in the church of the living God." This was not in the universal assembly in heaven. I do not know if Mr. Olivier wishes a more complete and absolute meaning than is given in the word. For my own part I am quite content with what I find there. But what does he make of that time when (p. 23) "the measure of the church, which is the body of Christ, was the rule of the measure of the kingdom?" That is not in heaven at a future time, I suppose. It is what took place at the commencement. The kingdom of God was confounded with His church (p. 25). The true kingdom is none other than the church (p. 25). Let us add to all this confusion, that if the true kingdom is nothing more than the church, and that (p. 24) the church only contains the members of Jesus, then the kingdom in which one finds tares, whence Christ removes the scandals, where He acts as King, is not at all the true kingdom; that kingdom of heaven, of which the Spirit of God speaks in Matthew, where Christ is King, which is His kingdom, is not the true kingdom. There is the effect of confounding the pure kingdom

with the church—of making distinctions between an outward and an inward kingdom: in a word, of getting completely away from the word of God.

Let us now come to the word dispensation. Here Mr. Olivier is very unfortunate even in the things in which “a smattering” is necessary for teachers, from the time when miraculous gifts ceased in the church, and on account of the distance of times and places.

Economy, or dispensation, he says, means law of the house; but economy means nothing of the kind. It signifies the administration of a house; and, taken in an extended sense, it means any order of things that God has arranged, as when one says, animal economy, vegetable economy. It is true that the Greek word signifying ‘law’ is derived from the same root; but it is a derivation much more distant in meaning. Nemo means to distribute, divide, feed, etc.; and thus in a house there was steward, and an economy—a man who arranged, distributed, provided for the family; and all the order which resulted from this was the economy, the administration, of the house. Thus, when God had established a certain order of things upon the earth, one has accustomed oneself, pretty correctly, as it appears to me, to call it an economy. The word of God even makes use of it, Eph. 1. It is possible that there may be a shade of difference between the scriptural and the conventional use of the word. In general, the way in which it is used in the word of God is more strictly according to its original meaning, and contains rather the idea of an active administration. The word dispensation is often used thus, and it has the same etymological meaning. God dispenses His favours. In the conventional sense, economy means an order of things

established by God: the Jewish economy, the present economy, etc.

But these economies, until the coming of Christ, are, as far as their course is concerned, left to man, and to his responsibility, although God may work secretly. For example, the Lord speaks thus of the present economy, “So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” Outwardly, all goes on without the intervention of Christ, from the sowing of the seed until the harvest. Well, the time which elapses from the seed-sowing till the harvest is what is generally called the present dispensation. I have called it “the church dispensation,” because it is the time during which the church is called, and exists here below, in contrast with the Jews and the legal system. And one sees that, although in fact it is God who causes the corn to ripen, outwardly He seems to let everything take its own course. Thus, Satan may act in the midst of all this; man may sleep; and the whole state of things may become corrupt: and, in fact, it has become corrupt, as Israel became corrupt; and this dispensation also, this order of things, is in a state of ruin.

And (must I say it?) Mr. Olivier applies, according to 1 Timothy 4, the word apostasy to what has taken place; and he is right, for the word of God does so. I do not hold to the expression; it is much more exact than speaking, as he does, of the kingdom, and of the

apostasy of the kingdom (P. 95); because the latter embraces the government, and the King, and the harvest; whilst, in the ordinary sense, the word dispensation does not embrace them. The King terminates the present dispensation when He begins to reap in His kingdom. And see what extraordinary confusion Mr. Olivier introduces into his criticisms on that word. “The present dispensation is the dispensation of the grace of God” (p. 111). But this passage merely speak of a ministry confided to Paul— “if ye have heard of the dispensation (ministry, oikonomia) of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward.” Here we see the meaning which I have pointed out— the primitive sense of the word; it is someone to whom the distribution and administration in the house have been entrusted. But can one say that the present dispensation, in the ordinary sense of the word, was entrusted to Paul? That would be ridiculous.

In 1 Corinthians 9:16, 17, the word of evangelisation is said to be an administration (oikonomia) which is entrusted to him. Once more, let me ask, was the present dispensation, in the sense which every one takes it, confided to Paul? The apostle uses the word “stewards” (1 Cor. 4) in the same sense, applying it to his ministry. Martin translates it “dispensers of the mysteries of God.” I cannot admire the effect of a smattering of the knowledge of Greek. It seems to me that it obscures the subject, whilst it is very inexact in the translation of the word.

Mr. Olivier is not willing that we should try to gather together Christians as such, but only some Christians (p. 108). Perhaps we should not succeed, for want of faith, and spirituality; but what he rejects is the will of God;

what he desires is the convenience of men, and with this object; “for (this is the history of it) these weak things are churches and ministries” (p. 103).

Allow me, in passing, to make a remark. I discover, alas! the secret of the pamphlet in two sentences: in the accusation brought against his brethren, of being revolutionists, who say, “get out of that place that I may get into it” (p. 160); and in this sentence (p. 154), “I consider it an important thing that the exercise of their gifts should be regulated by that of the leading minister.” I find it much better that it should be regulated by the word of God; a leading minister may, no doubt, help as to this in the church, as he may help in everything else.

I should remark here, in passing, that the same word is used in speaking of Judas and Silas (Acts 15), as is translated, “them that have the rule over you,” Heb. 13:17. In the passage in Acts 15, no one dreams of giving to that word the same meaning as is attempted to be drawn from Hebrews 13. Again we have a little use made of the smattering of Greek: that which has been translated “recognize” (1 Thess. 5:12), is not recognise (that is, formally) at all, but know. It means only to acknowledge by affection and respect, but in nowise by a public act— “a regular vote of the church.”

I leave to Mr. Rochat and the dissenters the task of answering what is said in pages 101 and 102. “We are, it is true, in the midst of a corrupted kingdom, where it is impossible to recover the primitive position of believers.” I think it is impossible to find it if we seek the outward form, as dissenters have done, but not at all impossible if we seek the foundation, if we withdraw

ourselves from every evil thing; for God is faithful, and does not weary in His love towards those who seek Him.

As to the apostasy of the dispensation, I have already touched upon it in speaking of the dispensation; but I have treated it at length in the Remarks on the State of the Church. Only when Mr. Olivier says that the apostles pointed out the evils which were creeping into the churches, he makes a mistake; it is in the so-called General Epistles, and in the Epistles to Timothy: epistles that are not addressed to churches, that the Spirit of God speaks of these evils. These epistles speak neither of churches nor of the kingdom—an all-important point, as I have already observed. The apostles do not speak of churches as becoming corrupt, but of a mystery of iniquity which was already at work, and which was not in such or such a church. Mr. Olivier is entirely wrong on this point. Let us remember that Mr. Olivier applies the word apostasy to the doctrines and to the conditions of the national churches and of the Roman church, which, however, are not churches; and we shall then understand what is the force of the denial of apostasy in the dispensation. (Compare pp. 65, 67.)

Let us come to Romans 11:1-22. First Mr. Olivier says that from verses 1-10, Paul is shewing that God, while He has cast off Israel as a nation, has not cast off the Israelites as individuals. It is surprising that anyone should have fallen into such a mistake. The church, which was chiefly, or at least in great part, composed of Jews, could never have raised the question of the Israelites being individually rejected. What kind of a gospel would it be, that could leave such a question undecided? The question is this, “Has God cast off his people?” The first proof that He has not done so is, that

there is an election, as in the time of Elias—the rest were blinded.

Second proof. If they stumbled, it was not that they should fall, but that salvation might be granted to the Gentiles. Here, observe, the apostle does not say to some Gentiles, but to the Gentiles; and that the Gentiles, not some Gentiles, are put in contrast with the Jews. It is very certain that they are not elect Gentiles in contrast with elect Jews; but Gentiles in contrast with Jews. This is why the apostle says that the rejection of the latter is the reconciling of the world. So that the apostle tells us that the Gentiles, the world, have been placed, since the fall of the Jews, in a different relation with God from that in which they were before. It is not a question of deciding whether they have all been made partakers of the efficacy flowing from that relationship; but the relationship exists.

The third proof is that, when the fulness of the Gentiles has come in, all Israel, Israel as a nation, shall be saved, and that at the return of Christ. When the apostle says, “I speak to you Gentiles,” he does not say, as Mr. Olivier makes him, “to you faithful Gentiles”; for he adds, “Inasmuch as I am an apostle of the Gentiles.” Was he the apostle of the faithful Gentiles? Clearly not. He was the apostle of the Gentiles as Gentiles, in contrast with the Jews, the circumcision, of whom Peter was the apostle. Again, verse 13 precedes verse 25, where he says “my brethren.” In verse 13, and following, he is occupied with the salvation granted to the Gentiles, and the reconciliation of the world as a doctrine, and not as a warning to his brethren.

Mr. Olivier further makes verses 17-22 to be a warning to the faithful and the believing; as if Paul said to them that, if they did not persevere, they would be cut off. But it seems to me rather singular to say that, because the mass of unbelieving Israel had been cut off and the election saved, the election from among the Gentiles was to take heed lest it also should be cut off. The more the passage is examined, the more evident it is that the interpretation which applies to the present dispensation (looked at under the aspect of the calling in of the Gentiles, and which makes it a warning to the Gentiles as to their responsibility) is the only true interpretation. As to Abraham, I consider him as the root, but looked at as the personification of the three principles—election, calling, and promise.83 I distinctly maintain that there are privileges outside vital union with Christ, and privileges for which the Gentiles will be responsible, as the Jews have been for theirs. See 1 Corinthians 10. Those who have enjoyed these privileges will be beaten with more stripes if they have not profited by them; whilst those who have not possessed them will be beaten with few stripes. It was a privilege to be a servant in the house, to have received a talent; but such persons, or classes of persons, were not vitally united to Christ. The seed sown on the stony ground was a privilege; but it had no root, no vital union.

And now for the three economies (p. 140)—it is a very unexpected result. If there were three, I should not make so great a mistake as to confound them with the same word used in the sense of an administration entrusted to an individual, Col. 1:25; Eph. 3:2.

The word of God says three things as to the present dispensation. First; by the existence and by the

principles of this dispensation, the world is placed in a fresh relationship with God. The Gentiles are no longer regarded as “dogs” in contrast with “the children.” It is the time of salvation for the Jew first and also for the Greek. Salvation is granted to the Gentiles; the fall of the Jews has been the reconciling of the world. If the church has not been faithful in using this grace for profit to the poor world, so much the worse for the church.

Secondly; those who are called, but not elect, all the baptised, are put in direct relation with the Lord, and are responsible in general (I say in general, because circumstances vary) for the privileges of Christianity. If those who really enjoyed these privileges have given liberty to Satan to corrupt; or, if others have been able to come in because of the corruption which had already been introduced, so much the worse (I say again) for them and for the aggregate; such is Christendom.

In the third place; there is the body of Christ, those who are united to Him, who partake of His life and who will be saved spite of all the obstacles that they meet with in the journey.

I see in this neither three dispensations nor a single difficulty. No one thinks that the Gentiles were grafted in as a body. Those who believed stood by faith. Those who entered without faith will be judged according to the privileges which they abused. And, before the end, God will send the gospel of the kingdom in order that judgment may not fall upon all without a testimony having been given to them.

In all his reasonings upon this subject, Mr. Olivier has confounded the ways of God towards Israel and towards the world with the salvation of individuals.

And this is one of the points of the church's responsibility in which it has completely failed. It ought to have been one, that the world might believe; it has not been so. It ought to have been a witness to all nations; it has not been so. And instead of being the source of good to the world, as it ought to have been, the world has been a source of evil to it—the church, properly so called—to true Christians. Instead of being the light of the world, it has become, according to its own confession, the invisible church. This is why I have spoken of Christendom and of the Gentiles grafted into the place of the Jews; for what God had grafted into the place of the Jewish branches became worldly, failed in faithfulness, and is become, in the modern sense, Christendom—the little seed, a great tree where the birds of the air make their nests.

All Mr. Olivier's reasonings are only obscuring a very simple thing. As the early Christians have not been faithful, the consequence is that the testimony and the profession of Christianity as a whole in this world have been marred. If it were a question of the taste of wine, a bottle of the best wine put into a cask of water might give rise to many reasonings whether good wine were there or not: those who are fond of drinking it would soon settle the question.

When Mr. Olivier says that I consider infidels as members of the body of Christ, it is only because he did not understand the application of what I said in answer to Mr. Rochat's pamphlet. Mr. Rochat, having separated from evil, did not wish to share the responsibility of the state of things which surrounded him; for myself, I bear the burden of it. It would not be worth while noticing an accusation which refutes itself, if what is said were not a

fresh proof of the absence of all idea of the church's responsibility down here. I have neither spoken of unbelievers nor of the members of the body of Christ; I have spoken of the state of the church. Nor do I only speak of the unfaithfulness of true members. The glory of Christ is not manifested: the church does not shine before the world. The glory of Christ is, as it were, hidden, dragged in the dust; and enemies triumph because of it. The enemy's power succeeds morally in most cases, as the enemies of Israel succeeded when Israel was unfaithful. Nor was there only individual unfaithfulness to deplore, but a condition of things which dishonoured God in the world. Mr. Olivier does not perceive this, at least according to what he says here. Hence the accusation he brings against me of regarding unbelievers as members of the body of Christ, although I neither spoke of unbelievers nor of members of His body. This is the root of the matter—the manifestation of the glory of Christ upon the earth by the church: ought the church to have manifested it? Ought we to humble ourselves if it does not do so? If this be false, I am mistaken; if this be true, the opposite system is profound iniquity—an iniquity of which people, no doubt, are not aware, but which is none the less an iniquity that leaves the church without hope from those who prop it up.

As to the attack upon the meetings of brethren, I make no answer. That there is difficulty and weakness, I do not doubt; but to answer would be either to justify ourselves or to accuse others. According to the blessing that exists in the meetings, God will bring those who He means to bless. If there is not any blessing, one cannot expect that He will make His children come.

I have for many years been accustomed to similar attacks, and I have found that the effect has been to turn aside those who had not faith enough to act from conviction, to stop simple persons for a time, and thus to exercise the faith of the brethren; but that after that the reaction has been stronger, and that it all turned to good and brought souls into a freer and more blessed position. Besides, in every case if we are reviled, we have only to submit in patience and to commit all to God. It is not surprising that those who have lived under a completely false system shoujd not quickly accustom themselves to simple truths. I can understand Mr. Olivier being accustomed to lead the worship, and wishing to do so; but I do not think he can shew me anything like this in the word of God—at least, in the New Testament. That the dissenting principle84 of all having a right to speak should have produced in others the desire to be the only speakers or to lead the worship, I understand very well; and that these two evils should have made simplicity more difficult, I also understand. But the wretchedness of a system which I think bad ought not to become a rule for the walk of those who wait on God.

The tendency of Mr. Olivier’s tract is to lead to the denial of the union and bringing together of the church on earth, and of the responsibility of the church as to the condition in which it now is. Consequently, I think it is an effort against the truth, although many grand truths are brought out in it. I consider his whole system, as to the church and kingdom, completely false. The results of it are to make Christ the King of the “unclean Babylon”; for, certainly, He is the King of the kingdom.

“The apostasy of the kingdom” is an absurdity, because, I repeat, the King and His government always exist; and the judgment of the King is a part of the manifestation of the kingdom. It is false to say that the pure kingdom is the same thing as the church; for the field, as much as the good corn, forms part of the kingdom. The field is purchased as much as the treasure hidden in it.

All this is but the consequence of traditional ideas, and the reasonings founded on them only serve to confuse. It is, as if I said, The canton of Geneva is composed of so many square miles of ancient territory, and of so many new ones united to them; and, afterwards, The canton of Geneva has voted such and such a thing in the diet; and then insisted upon the absurdity of a vote given by square miles. It is just the same if a person say, that, because the good seed is one of the elements of the description of the kingdom, therefore the kingdom is the good seed.

I have added these pages in the hope of proving that this boasted exactness, which imposes on so many simple people, is only confusion—a moral confusion impossible where faith is applied to these subjects. That inaccuracies of expression may be found in what I have written, is very possible. I had but one object—that conscience might be reached, and that the glory of God have full hold upon it. I trust that many consciences will yield to its precious influence.

May our good and faithful Saviour God, who loves to bless us, and whose goodness never wearies, grant this to us!

81 Geneva, 1843.

82 Griesbach rejects it absolutely from the text in order to put there “nations,” instead of “saints.”

83 Note to translation.—Abraham was the first called to be root of a new race.

84 Note to translation.—This refers to Switzerland.

## Thoughts On Romans 11, And On The Responsibility Of The Church

In Reference to a Pamphlet of Mr. F. Olivier, entitled

“Defence Of The Principles Laid Down In The Pamphlet,

‘Essay On The Kingdom Of God,’ Etc.”85

The reading of Mr. Olivier’s defence of his principles did not dispose me to answer him regularly on all points. The character of his reasoning did not induce me either to follow him in details, or to take up that which he has thought fit to oppose to me. Happily, after going through the pamphlet and examining somewhat attentively the conclusion at which he has arrived, I found there was no need for it; because, while blaming the reasoning through which I arrived at my own conclusions, and pointing out a few contradictions into which I had fallen, he ends by admitting the truth for which I stood up.

This will appear with the greatest evidence, if we examine with a little attention two things which are to be found in his writings on the subject. The great question raised between myself and the adversaries of the important truth on which I insist, is the existence of a church on earth; then the responsibility of Christians for the condition in which we are found— in which this church is found. I have insisted on the unity of God’s assembly and on the responsibility of its members as to the condition in which it is found. I have said that we are responsible for that condition, or, to speak more exactly, for the glory of God, such as it ought to have been manifested in the church on earth. Now Mr. Olivier says I have not by direct passages proves this responsibility;

but that what I presented may be considered as a pretty strong presumption of the responsibility of the church.

We shall say a word on responsibility; but there can be no presumption, either strong or feeble, of the responsibility of the church, if there be no church. The existence of the church, therefore, is recognised, and that on earth; for in the glorified church there is no question of appearing to be members of Christ, or of viewing sins or not as our own.

Here are Mr. Olivier's words, "As to these true members of Christ (or these, at least, who appear to be such) to whatever time they may belong, I may, in a measure, look upon their sins as my own." Mr. Olivier considers himself to be responsible in common with the true body of Christ. That is not the whole truth, nor exactly the truth, as I would state it; but after all there is a common responsibility, and the sins of those Christians are ours. This is to admit everything; this is the point for which I stand up: there is a common responsibility in the church from the beginning to the present day. But how solemn the consequences for the conscience, when once this truth is admitted! If we remember now that, at the beginning, the church and the kingdom were composed of the same persons (that is, of the true Christians or those at least who appeared to be such); that the church and the kingdom were confounded in one; even if one would say that it was Christians in the churches and in the kingdom who introduced corruption, and not the church corrupting itself; yet we also find, according to Mr. Olivier, that he himself, all of us—responsible in common as we are, in the unity of the church—ought to regard those sins of Christians as our own. It matters little whether this took place in the church or in the

kingdom. Those who did it were true members of Christ, or those who appeared to be such. But in the unity of the body we are responsible in common, and the sins of Christians at any time ought to be considered as our own. We have then, as clearly as when the sun shines forth after rain, the church; a common responsibility among its members in its unity, and the responsibility of the church according to that common responsibility. For, assuredly, those who have committed that evil and introduced corruption into the kingdom were responsible for it, and we can look upon their sins as our own. Well, if in this complete triumph of the truth—and it is the only one (God is my witness!) which I desire—the intelligence of him who has fought under its banner must undergo any humiliation—so much the better for the soul before God!

I shall not seek to justify myself as to the (about thirty) contradictions of which Mr. Olivier accuses me, although I have examined them; it matters little to me now that the truth has come to light. There are a few which I could not find out, as in pages 25 and 27; one or two are examined farther on, merely because they refer to questions which must still interest brethren. In the main, I still believe the two things which Mr. Olivier considers as contradictory. One there is which has the appearance of a contradiction, it is true, but that is all. In general it seemed to me that more light would make them clear to those who do not understand them, but I do not think fit to discuss them here. The grand truth being admitted, I leave behind me the road by which we have come to it.

This is what appears to be indeed a contradiction: I told Mr. Rochat that the Gentiles were received as a body; I

told Mr. Olivier that the Gentiles are not graffed in as a body. I still believe both these things. The house of Stephanas or any other was not graffed in as a Gentile body; but as the same time God views the aggregate of received Gentiles as a body86 responsible to Him; and this is what the Gentiles will understand when they shall be punished in an awful manner by the righteous judgment of God.

We might stop here, were it only a question of controversy and pamphlets; but several subjects of general interest to Christians having been entered into and discussed, it is well, for the satisfaction of all, to examine them more carefully. There are two which present themselves more especially. The one is, in what sense it may be said that we inherit sin. The other is the explanation and application of Romans n. Before, however, entering on the subjects, I would remind the reader to whom controversy is painful as it ought to be, as it has indeed been to me, that here the controversy did not bear on secondary points, nor on slight differences of opinion, as some would have us to believe; but on subjects of the utmost moment —on the existence of a church of God on earth, and on our responsibility with regard to its actual state—questions, I repeat it, of the most solemn nature, and which ought to interest every soul which has at heart the glory of Christ Himself.

Mr. Olivier may say, Why be so eager on questions of second-rate importance? But let us not be deceived: we are not on secondary questions. I repeat it again, it is a question of the responsibility of the church of God, and even of knowing if there be a church on earth. Is the existence of the church on earth and our responsibility

in relationship with that fact, a matter of second-rate importance? For my part, in the midst of the sorrows of controversy of Christians, I bless God that one has been brought to establish clearly that the matter in question is so fundamental, that what sometimes produces painful separations is by no means a slight difference of opinion, but the denial of the existence and responsibihty of the church of God on earth. That the source of divisions will be found to be there, I have the most profound conviction. God will not have the truth upon this subject set aside. Is the existence and the responsibihty of the church on earth a nice distinction—an opinion? Is it not clear that if any one have a clear conviction on these points, it ought to be a motive in the presence of God— the motive which will affect the whole conduct of a Christian as such, and his entire manner of seeing things; nay more, that a Christian's entire conduct and mode of seeing things will be moulded upon the existence of such a relationship? Could it be a matter of opinion to a woman to know whether she was the wife of such or such an one or not? And if she is, would one speak of a strong presumption of responsibility? Is not the question one of morality when relationships established by God exist? And is it not morality of the very highest kind possible, the morality which is based upon the relationship which God has established between His Son and the church which He has given to Him? morality, I admit, which is not within the limits of man's judgment—on which one could not insist when addressing the natural conscience, but which one may say forms the whole life of a Christian in the most exalted part of his conduct. It is a responsibility which governs all others, and which is even the spring of them.

I abstain from making remarks on particular passages of Mr. Olivier's pamphlet, but I would ask by the way, since he recognises now the existence of the church (for if it does not exist, there can be no presumption, either strong or weak, as to its responsibility), is it seemly to speak of a strong presumption of responsibility when such a relationship exists as that which subsists between Christ and the church? What need is there of proofs and analogies to demonstrate that the church is responsible, if it exists? Is it needful to prove the responsibility of a woman towards her husband? Or what would one say of the wife who raised a question about it (and towards such a husband!), and who—when one had made every effort, spite of one's shame to be obliged to do such a thing, to recall to her her duty—replied, that indeed there might be a strong presumption about it? Is responsibility a mode of thought? Is not responsibility the very basis of all morality, and is it not, along with grace, also that of even every doctrine which has to do with the relationships of God with man? And do not say, Yes, individual responsibility everyone recognises, that is what I have insisted upon. If the responsibility in common, of each individual, is that which is meant, it is well;87 but one seeks to avoid, by these equivocal expressions, that responsibility which refers to the state of the church, which ought to glorify the Lord as such, according to the position in which God has placed it, and to one's duties towards God in such position.

Now I believe that to insist upon this at the present time, is the subject the most important and necessary which there can be for a Christian and the most affecting for those who love Christ. It is a subject which brings with it consequences of the most solemn nature; I

earnestly beseech my readers to pay attention to it. I speak as of a testimony on the part of God. Time will shew if I am mistaken or if the testimony be of God;88 and therefore it was that I spoke of profound iniquity, because to withdraw the heart and conscience from under the influence of a relationship founded upon grace the most precious and astonishing—a relationship which should govern and mould every other which it does not destroy, especially since this relationship is one known to faith only, in such sort that to enfeeble faith is to enfeeble the perception of this relationship, and to call in question the responsibility which flows thence: I hold, I say, that it would be hard to designate such an attempt by an epithet too strong.

Having shewn of how solemn a nature the subject before us is, let us now turn to Romans 11. This chapter contains, it is true, the proof of only one of the points involved in this discussion, so that if this proof itself fails, or if this point is set aside, still the great truth, to wit, our position before God, would in nowise be changed. Yet the passage is important, and the making of its meaning clear is interesting to the believer. I therefore take it up again. Mr. Olivier accuses me of having reproduced very inaccurately the beginning of his short commentary on the subject, of representing him as raising the question, etc.; and he asks if the mistake here made by the author is yet to be attributed to precipitation. My reply to this is very simple; it is that I quoted textually what he had said. To ascertain it, one has only to compare page 25 of my answer, with page 130 of Mr. Olivier’s Essay, or with the quotation he makes of it in page 28 of the Defence. The commentary I made on what I quoted appeared to me and still appears

to me to be right; and in fact, I find that Mr. Olivier, in his interpretation of this passage, departs entirely from the thought of the apostle, and that the explanation he gives of it is untenable. He says that the reply to the question, “Hath God rejected His people? “is, that God has rejected Israel as a nation but not as individuals, as Paul was witness. Well, be it the question or the reply, I say he has not in the least apprehended the thought of the apostle or of the Holy Spirit. I repeat what I said in my first pamphlet, that the church could never have given rise to the question if Israel had been rejected as individuals, since the church was composed in great measure of Israelites. If Mr. Olivier has not put this as a question (and this I did not say), the reply he gives to the apostle’s question is absurd. He says that Israel was rejected as a nation, and not as individuals; and what reply is that to the question, “Hath God rejected his people?” If Israel was rejected as a nation and not as individuals, yet the rejection of the people was equally sure. It was a palpable fact that individuals were received; but the apostle applies it in proof that the people were not rejected, a question indeed which the substitution of the church raised. He cites his own case, not to shew that he had been received as an individual, but in proof of the interest he took in his nation. He was of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. Now what is the meaning of being of the tribe of Benjamin, if it is not the people, as a people, whom God still loves? God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. What people? The people of whom he speaks in verse I—Israel! One cannot doubt it when one reads the end of chapter 10. And I ask, if the question was about the election of individuals, what ground could there be for proposing the question whether the people of God were

rejected because the church was called? No; but in that God had reserved an election from among the people of Israel, set aside for the moment on account of its sin, He had given proof that He still thought of that people; as the case of the seven thousand in the days of Elijah also shewed. Moreover, verses 26-29 leave no doubt upon the subject; for he affirms, while speaking of the future reception of Israel, that, although as to the gospel they are enemies for the sake of the Gentiles, as to election they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. Who would say that they, who are enemies as to the gospel, yet loved for the fathers' sakes, and who thus present the proof that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, are accepted as individuals? Could any one say that this is a proof that the people is rejected as a nation, though not as individuals? Would anyone say that the election of individuals for the church is on account of the fathers?

I repeat then that Mr. Olivier has not apprehended the thought of the apostle, but on the contrary, attributes to him a thought which the whole chapter contradicts, and which appears altogether erroneous if one does but take the trouble to read it; for it is clear that Israel loved for the fathers' sakes, yet enemies as to the gospel, is not Israel loved as individuals, but quite the contrary. Paul shews that the momentary rejection of the nation was by no means God's definitively rejecting His people; that they were yet beloved for the fathers' sakes, an elect people, the gifts and calling of God being without repentance; and he proceeds almost to state the very opposite of what Mr. Olivier says as to individuals: for he says, "If some of the branches were broken off," that is, he takes pains to restrict the breaking off to some branches. I conclude then that the whole interpretation

given by Mr. Olivier to the chapter fails in the very basis of his whole thought—that he has not even understood what the apostle is speaking of.

It is evident to those who may examine what I wrote (p. 26) that when I said, “verses 13 and following,” my intention was to contrast the verses which immediately follow verse 13 with those further on, for in the preceding passage I had expressly done so;89 and in fact, in verse 13 and those which follow it is not a question of warnings but of doctrine.

Lower down in the chapter there is a warning, but here also we must take up the subject from an earlier point. That every Christian may well find profit here, I doubt not; but the warning is addressed to us, not as brethren, but as being of the Gentiles. My readers should remember that if there had not been something peculiar, there would have been no need to speak of Gentiles. Nay, one could not have done it. The apostle speaks no longer here of the church, considered on the principle of her relationship to Christ. That subject closed with chapter 8. Nothing is able to separate the believer from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord; whom He did foreknow He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son: He called them, Jews as well as Gentiles, no matter which, and He justified and glorified them. He speaks then here of the special administration of the work of the church upon earth, and in reference to Israel, of its condition and circumstances down here; of its relation with the ancient people of God; he asks if that people had been rejected, and what the consequences are of all this for the Gentiles, and for the world.

In Jesus Christ, if the question be about Christian position, eternal life, or the church considered in her essential relationship to Christ, there was neither Jew nor Gentile; the thoughts found in this chapter can there have no place. If the question be about the cutting off of an individual for sinful conduct, little matters it whether he be Jew or Gentile, that has nothing to do with it; and on the other hand, there would be no question about the grafting in again of the Jews more than of any others, and neither Jews nor others could be grafted in if God had cut them off in such a manner. And if it were a question about a warning from the apostle to Christians at Rome, and so to others elsewhere, as being brethren, it would be almost nonsense to say, And thou, O Gentile, take heed! Why, "I speak to you Gentiles?" Had not Christians, Jews by birth, as much need to take heed? Or could the Spirit of God in such a warning have made the distinction, and thus denied the principle of the church of God in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile? If the question is about a divine administration upon earth, then God can well make the distinction and develop His ways towards the one and the other; and it is plain that from the commencement of chapter 9 the apostle is occupied with this, and pointedly contrasts the Jews and Gentiles, presenting us with the administration of the divine ways upon the earth. First, declaring his attachment to Israel, he points out an election in the election for the earth, and further, that if God according to His sovereignty had chosen Israel (and such was Israel's boast), He had not renounced His sovereignty; and consequently He could call the Gentiles if He would. Then he recalls to mind that the prophets had shewn that a little remnant only of Israel at such an epoch

would be saved, and that a stone of stumbling would be laid in Zion.

Then in chapter 10 (after having anew protested his ardent desires for the welfare of Israel as such, notwithstanding all their ignorance) he introduces Christ the end of the law, faith, the testimony by preaching, and lastly, Israel provoked to jealousy by a foolish nation—God found of those who sought Him not, and Israel rebellious and gainsaying, God having in vain stretched forth His hands to them. Then he asks, “Is then this people rejected?” God forbid; God loves them still, and has reserved a remnant of them. The apostle then shews that their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, and the riches of the Gentiles; at the same time he presents their fall to the Gentiles received into the place90of the branches cut out as a warning, lest they also should experience a like fate, and then he declares that Israel as a whole should be again restored when the Deliverer should come out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob, its unbelief having ceased. Is it not very evident here that the apostle speaks not to brethren in a church, in the character of brethren? For in such case it imports little whether they be Jews or Gentiles, or rather they would be neither one nor the other; that in short, he does not speak to them here simply as being brethren in Christ, but that he treats of the ways of God upon earth in reference to certain classes of persons, as Jews or Gentiles, reckoned as such before God in the administration of His government and promises here below.

It was well timed to introduce this in an epistle addressed to Christians at Rome (moreover not addressed as a church), the capital of the Gentile world,

in an epistle which treats of the whole judgment of God in His relations with men—Gentiles, Jews, in Adam, by means of Moses, without law and under law, believers in Christ, possessing the Spirit, objects of all the government of God; which treats in short of the specialities of the consequences of the gospel with regard to His promises toward the earthly people, and shews how His faithfulness to them could be reconciled with the calling of the church (for heaven perhaps, but) upon earth, and its introduction into the enjoyment of the promises made to Abraham (till then exclusively the lot of the earthly people). This in fact needed an explanation; and the Lord by the Spirit gave it in His goodness, at the same time explaining the effect produced upon the world by the temporary rejection of Israel, and warning the Gentiles received into the place of the branches which had been cut out, of the position in which they really were found as such: Gentiles, I say —remark it—and not the church; this could not be—the elect Jews formed part of it, and they are not warned at all. In the church, for heaven, that distinction was not known. “But thou, O Gentile,” not “but thou, O professor”; but “thou, O Gentile, I speak to thee only.” But why does he so speak if it was only a solemn warning against pride, for the profit of their souls? A converted Jew or Christian, had not he need of it? The Jew—did he not also stand by faith? This passage is found at the close of a development of the ways of God, contained, as we have just seen, in this epistle: and to make of it a simple warning, is to misapprehend all the thought of God in it, and thus to forget that when the church as such is spoken of, there is neither Jew nor Gentile; we are all one in Jesus Christ.

As to what Mr. Olivier says (p. 31), I did not accuse him of saying that the election must beware lest it be cut off, because it (the election) is saved; but if Mr. Olivier turns the passage into a warning to Gentile believers really standing by faith as such (that is to say, to the election from among the Gentiles, as he has done), he really turns the cutting off of Israel and the wonderful faithfulness of God in sparing the election from among that people, into a warning to the election from among the Gentiles, that they should fear to be cut off. This is exactly the force of what he says, and I feel more than ever the absurdity of his interpretation of the passage, in noticing again this remark.

I pass over the omission of the words, “from among Israel” and “from among the Gentiles” in his observations, an omission which completely disfigures the sense. In his phrase the election is the same election; in my remarks two elections are contrasted. My reply to page 32 is already made. Mr. Olivier (p. 33) says that Paul speaks to Gentile believers. The question is, to know, not to whom he speaks, but of what? No one doubts that the apostle is addressing the Christians at Rome, while pointing specially to the Gentiles; but wherefore this distinction if it were simply a warning for the good of their souls individually, as in the passages of which Mr. Olivier would take advantage and on which I have nothing to say, because they have nothing to do with our subject, except Hebrews 6, which I believe contains an allusion to the doom of this economy?91 But it would be going too far away from our proper subject to enter upon it. Moreover, Mr. Olivier has not in the least understood my thought. I have not in my reply passed over the words, “standing by faith.” I presented

(p. 28) very distinctly the effect of the ways of God in cutting off Israel, and introducing the gospel, upon the world, their effect upon professors, their effect upon believers.

Now I cannot admit that “standing by faith,” “grafted into the olive,” and “in the goodness of God” are expressions signifying one and the same thing. They may here apply in a general way to the same persons, though even this is not, accurately speaking, true; but they do not signify the same thing. The Jews who believed, for instance, were indeed by the goodness of God, in the order of things introduced by Christ, but they were not grafted into the good olive-tree in the sense in which this is said of the Gentile. He speaks of their olive-tree, which is another proof that he speaks of the administration of things here below, and not of salvation nor of a cutting off in the simple sense of loss of salvation. If the question were about the promises of life eternal in Christ risen, in contrast with the death of the soul, there would be no difference; it would be no more their olive-tree than that of the Gentiles. “Goodness toward thee” is not the state in which the individual finds himself, but the relationship in which God presents Himself as being towards those who, according to the principles of the economy, are the objects of that goodness. Consequently he speaks not of goodness towards the Jewish believers, although they were in the same goodness of God as the rest, because the Jews were there as branches by nature, although now cut off, for the greater part, for their unbelief. So true is this, that the apostle speaks of grafting them in again. If it is simply an individual warning, could he that had been cut off (according to Hebrews 6 and 10,

passages quoted by Mr. Olivier) be grafted in again? And if the apostle speaks of individuals only, why says he that they can be grafted in again? Is it not evident that he speaks of Jews as Jews, and that this would be accomplished if the Jews were admitted to the enjoyment of the promises at the end of the ages, although the apostle says they (that is to say, quite other individuals than those of that day, but yet Jews) can be grafted in again? Is it not further evident that although they partake not in the enjoyment of the heavenly blessings, that would still be true, because they will be upon their own olive-tree, enjoying the promises made to Abraham? They will be grafted therein again.

Moreover, although an individual stands by faith when he believes, such nevertheless is not all the apostle means; it is the principle upon which he stands, and not the possession of the thing which is in question. He who possesses faith will never be cut off. In the Epistle to the Galatians, it is said, “After that faith came,” that is, after the establishment of that principle of relationship with God in place of law. Now we stand by faith, that is the principle of our relationship; the goodness of God exercises itself towards those who find themselves there. I do not see that it is said that the grafting in is by real faith of the heart, although there be nought solid save that which is such. Hebrews 6 supposes the participation of all the privileges of the Christian economy without real faith of the heart, and without fruit being borne to God, and I know not who would say that Simon the magician was not grafted in, although so soon cut off. It may be said, he believed; Yes. Yet just as all the professors of to-day believe, that is to say, like Christendom. In short, I find here in chapter 11 the

principles of the administration of the economy, and not the state of individuals, although these principles, doubtless, are realised in the individuals who really believe in the gospel. He speaks not of faithful Gentiles, save in the sense in which one can call professors "faithful."

In general, the reply I made (p. 28 of my last pamphlet) is sufficient as to pages 34 and 35: "the cutting off of Israel has been the reconciling of the world." All the baptised are under the responsibility, in general, of the privileges of the economy, and will be judged accordingly; believers find their enjoyment therein, according to their faith. I add, that Mr. Olivier is mistaken, when he says that the world can lose nothing. It is true that the world will enjoy other advantages during the millennium, far greater it may be; but the world now has the enjoyment of great advantages, which will be taken from it when the judgment takes place—when the Master of the house rises up and shuts to the door. If, by an act of divine judgment, the gospel can no longer be preached in any country, that country has lost a privilege; so it will be with the world. The world has not been grafted in, but the world has been placed in a new relationship towards God. Farther on, I will return to this point; in the meanwhile, I will cite a remarkable passage which applies to this subject (Luke 2:32); Christ has been a light for the revelation of the Gentiles. They were, before, so entirely in obscurity, that they were as if not in existence in the sight of God, not as to the judgment of the secrets of the heart, but as to the government of the world on the part of God: a distinction which Mr. Olivier seems to be ignorant of. "The times of this ignorance," says the apostle, "God

winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead," Acts 17. Is not this to change the position of the world before God? And if God has proposed to use His church as an instrument for this, and it has failed, that will bring with it its result, even as to the world in reference to the government of God, although each one shall bear his own burden as to the eternal judgment. (Compare Ezekiel 33.)

That God will be justified, when He shall judge and condemn the world, I cannot doubt; that He will send the gospel of the kingdom at the end, the church having failed in its duty, I believe; but this changes nought as to that which God has revealed concerning His relationship to the world, as we have seen in Acts 17:30, 31.

In fact, I feel a difficulty in replying to Mr. Olivier's observations, because he appears to have entirely neglected this thought of the government of God. It is the government of God which is the subject of these chapters in the Epistle to the Romans, and not the salvation of the individual, properly so called. In the second chapter, the apostle speaks of that, of perishing without law, of being judged by the law, etc.; but to say that a sovereign disposition by God imposes no responsibility upon those to whom it is not known, is to misconceive the whole subject, although such a thought may have to the natural heart an air of great justice. Men sometimes find themselves without excuse under the effect of a judgment of God, occasioned by the fault of their fathers, themselves persevering in the moral

consequences of the fault, though they may not have individually committed the very fault itself. See, for example, the judgment of the Spirit upon the state of Gentiles (Rom. 1), “Having known God, they glorified him not as God,” etc. The Gentiles, of whom he speaks, had never known Him; their fathers, Noah, etc., had known Him. If fresh light came which made manifest that state, they are held responsible to quit it according to that light, and guilty, also, according to that fight of all which they do as individuals afterwards; but there is then another thing: the light enables us, I say us, to see where they are who are without the light which we enjoy, and they are without excuse.

On the other hand, if great privileges have been granted to a people, and they have lost the knowledge thereof, they will yet be responsible (see what Josiah said when he found the book of the law), because, according to the government of God, one is responsible according to the place in which one is found, and not according to our capability of fulfilling it. Moreover, it is clearly not to the world that Paul addressed himself; but that is not the question. Even if it were true that Paul spoke only to believers, yet, since it is to a special class of believers that he does so (a distinction which would be impossible if the question were about the fundamental idea of the church), he can speak to that class under a peculiar aspect, all the while that he calls them brethren (and so he does), and give them instructions upon all that which concerned the subject on which he treats; and this is what he does. He may, at the same time, include other persons who are found in the same position without true faith, and this he insinuates; he can also speak of the consequences of his doctrine to the world, as also he

does. To suppose, as some have done, that because he speaks to brethren he speaks only of brethren, and concerning those who are really such, seems futile; and one can see indeed that up to verse 25 he reasons in an abstract manner, according to the train of thought which the Spirit suggests to him; and having explained all the consequences of the ways of God, he at last declares, using the expression, “I say, then,” addressing himself to his brethren, that he does so because he would not have them ignorant of this mystery. But he had previously developed the great principles and thought of God as to the mystery, its effect upon the world, upon the Gentiles, etc.

To me it is evident, that as to that practical bearing and application of these words, “you Gentiles,” though all Gentiles be liable to their application, those who are referred to in the words of Simeon (Luke 2) are the only ones who are the object of them; the rest, as the inhabitants of Central Africa, for instance, exist not for the application of the reasoning of God in this chapter. When God applies them so, He will take care, by the preaching of the everlasting gospel, that all the Gentiles should be the objects of the judgment which will shew the justice of His government; but we cannot exactly address to them these warnings; we should be right in applying to them the doctrine which Paul applies (Acts 17); there he preaches to the world, here he speaks to professors. It is not exactly the inhabitants of the countries in which the gospel has been preached who are the Gentiles “brought to light,” only the light is come there to bring them into light; but it is the countries of the baptised, where Christianity is professed. In theory, all the Gentiles have been brought into light. God takes

knowledge of them. Therefore the apostle can say to the Colossians, “The gospel which is come unto you as it is in all the world, and brings forth fruit”; but as to the position of responsibility as a body, that is realised where they have been Christianised.

As to the disappearing of the contrast (p. 37) between the unbelief of the Jews, and the Gentiles standing by faith, there is no such thing. If the faith spoken of were the faith of an individual, there could be no cutting off; but the apostle points out the principle upon which the standing is, and that by which a falling may take place, in order to shew that as the Jews enjoying certain privileges lost them through unbelief, a similar thing would befall the Gentiles as to their privileges, if they should be found in the same position of unbelief. This is clear enough, I think. The apostle speaks not of those “standing by faith” in order to shew that those who were would be cut off, but to shew the principle upon which they stood, and that if, on the contrary, that failed, they would be cut off. Now as to a true believer, that could not ever be; but for him who was in the enjoyment of privileges, who was in the goodness of God as to his position, but who had not faith, the same thing which had happened to the Jews in similar circumstances might happen to him. It is in such persons that these warnings ever find their fulfilment.

With regard to what is said in pages 37 and 38, the question is not about reception, but about cutting off. As to the administration of things on earth (and that is what the apostle is occupied with here) Simon Magus was received. On pages 38 and 39 I have nothing to add. Only besides Colossians 1:6, already quoted, I shall call attention to 1 Timothy 2:5-7, which is a well-known

abstraction of the apostle. What follows is only a confusion of the three distinct cases—of the world, of Christendom, and of believers—already pointed out in my first reply to Mr. Olivier, and of which he only quotes the first (pp. 40, 41), as if this were the sole application I had made of the principle. If he had quoted the whole passage (p. 28 of my Reply) he would have spared the reader the trouble of reasoning on what he said, and me that of noticing such an omission; for if any one has read what I there said, all that he replies is without application. He reasons on one of the cases I noticed, omitting the others, as if that were all I said on the matter, and as if I had confounded the world—the Gentiles—with believers, in the application of these general principles; whereas, in the lines which follow what he extracted, I had pointed out two other cases, that of professors and that of believers, in which the application of the apostle's doctrine was quite different.

He has omitted the first word of the passage he quotes: "first," before the words "by the existence and by the principles," etc.; and also that which precedes, "the word says three things, as to the present dispensation." I have avoided all such remarks, and all reply to things which were not connected with the root of the question; but it was needful that I should notice this, because we have been considering this eleventh chapter of the Romans—a point which naturally preoccupies those who take an interest in this question; and I have been obliged to clear up all that has been said on the point, for that is the main subject of the reasoning of this chapter. I still believe that man is responsible for the privileges he enjoys; I here add to Acts 17, Colossians 1:6; 1 Timothy 2:5-7 (already quoted); John 1:11 and 5. He was in the

world, but the world knew Him not; the light shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. I add this simply to confirm this principle.

When Mr. Olivier says that I asserted that the world, the Gentiles, will be responsible for these privileges, he is not quite correct. I did say that the world, the Gentiles, are placed in a new relationship towards God, and that there are privileges for which the Gentiles will be responsible, as the Jews have been for theirs. Those who have enjoyed these privileges will be beaten with many stripes if they have not profited from them, whilst such as possessed them not will be punished with few stripes. It seems to me that this is quite another thing from saying that the world and the Gentiles, being placed in a new relationship to God, will be responsible for those privileges which they possess, outside vital union with Christ. I spoke of the world as in a new relationship to God, of the Gentiles who enjoyed certain privileges, and of those who have not possessed them. Thus Mr. Olivier presents me as blending the very things which I put in contrast. Besides, does Mr. Olivier deny that the world or any man is responsible for the privileges which they possess? And here the question is not about the responsibility of those called of God, but of an universal principle of any privilege men may enjoy; and even if the called were spoken of, the question would not be of those “standing by faith,” in the sense given by Mr. Olivier— that is, in the sense of true believers. Is not Christendom called? And this is the essential point at issue; only to say more of it here it would be needful to enter upon the second subject I have to treat. Further, it is no question about Gentiles who have had the gospel preached to them, but about that which is called the

church of baptised Gentiles, and consequently the conduct of true Christians from the commencement.

In fine, this is the substance of chapter 11. Up to the end of chapter 8 the apostle sets forth the state of man, whether Jew or Gentile, the efficacy of the blood, and the power of the resurrection of Christ, as well as the sweet and precious privileges of which the believer is rendered partaker in Christ, and he shews us the source and security of these privileges, God being for us, and we partaking of these privileges, not only according to the eternal counsel of love, but according to the power of the eternal life, which was in Christ before the foundation of the world, and which has been communicated to us. After this full opening out of truth, the thought of Israel suggesting itself immediately to his heart, he turns to the administration of the promises here below; then he explains in chapters 9 and 10 that what seemed inexplicable in the substitution of the church for Israel was in perfect accordance with all that God had said and done, with His imprescriptible rights on which depended the title of Israel itself; that, moreover, what had just come to pass had been predicted; that they had stumbled upon the stone of stumbling. He asks, Has God then rejected His people? God forbid! I, says he, am a Jew, but there is, as there was of old, an election in the midst of this very people, and that which God now does, does but put a little more forward His perfect ways and His unfailing grace. For have they stumbled that they should fall?92 By no means! It is but a means of introducing the Gentiles as such into the enjoyment of the promises, and thus, as he says, to excite them to jealousy (to excite, note, those who are, says he, of my flesh); for that rejection has

placed God in relationship with the world, and caused the wild olive, the Gentile, to be grafted into the heritage of promise into the midst of the branches which by nature were of the good olive—speaking here evidently of the administration of the promises here below, for they were by nature children of wrath even as others. He calls even the unbelievers branches according to nature; but these having been cut off on account of their unbelief, there had been grafted in the midst of the Jewish believers (these also inheriting the promises equally according to the election of grace) some new branches taken out of the wild olive in order that they might also enjoy the promises; but let them take heed, even these branches, to recognise the grace which grafted them in. Otherwise, according to the same perfect administration of the promises here below, God could cast them off in like manner. And on the other hand, the Jews abandoning their unbelief would be grafted in again. The Gentile had reason to fear; he stands by faith; if faith fails, certainly he is no better than a Jew. The apostle not only shews what is to be feared (which is addressed to the conscience, and consequently, in that sense, in order that it may be applied individually); but after that he comes to something positive. Such, then, is the thought of God. Israel is blinded for the moment in part, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and then Israel as a whole, as a nation, shall be saved. God will not repent of His gifts and calling. Enemies for the Gentiles' sake as to the gospel, they are yet beloved for the fathers' sakes. One can see the characteristic manner in which the Gentile is taken up, for he is called the wild olive: "Thou being a wild olive." Also he, the Gentile, is placed upon the root, not upon the trunk, nor upon the branches. He became

neither a Jew, nor of Israel. And the reason, as it seems to me, that he says, Thou, O Gentile, in the singular, is because the question was, as to the Gentile, one of principle. As to the Jew, it was an accomplished fact that the branches had been cut off; the church, properly so called, regarded as the corporate body of believers, could not be; and it is thus that the apostle then contemplated them, and it is thus also that they really were; and a threat was so much the more inapplicable under this point of view, that there were Jews as well as Gentiles, and as to the latter, it was the election from among the Gentiles which had just been brought in. In that point of view, then, I could not speak of cutting off. The election from among the Jews—an idea found indeed, it is true, in the prophets, but new in the history of the people, remained upon the trunk, and thus the threat of cutting off could not be addressed to the election newly grafted in, but to the individual, as a Gentile, if he persevered not in that position. The explanation of this mystery is, that there was a partial blinding of Israel until the election from among the Gentiles—their real fulness—should come in; for the church began with a remnant. Israel ended with the separation of a remnant; but that fulness once accomplished, that which is not of faith among the Gentiles, which might be found there, would be cut off.

Paul was entrusted with the revelation of the church in its highest character of union with Christ and in its unity. The subject on which we have spoken, this eleventh chapter, was with him an episode; whilst with Peter, it was his ministry; he had the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and it is this which constitutes the difference in ministry of these two blessed servants of

God. If their discourses and writings are studied, this will soon be seen.93 If I have spoken of responsibility in connection with the church, it is because the activity of the love of God, the ministry of reconciliation was entrusted to it, and the application of this doctrine of responsibility to it is practical, and goes home to our consciences; but that changes nothing in the government of God, as we have already seen in the word.

Now, when Mr. Olivier assumes that (pp. 45-47) he expresses my thoughts, I must say that it is not so; that, on the contrary, all he says there appears to me a mass of confusion, and even of error. First, Mr. Olivier tells us that at all times God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and not imputing their trespasses unto them. This is a somewhat astonishing assertion. At all times! Where does he find this “At all times”? God was in the Anointed at all times; but it was formerly a mystery, etc. Neither was this the mystery: the blessing of the Gentiles, the blessing of all the families of the earth, had not been at all concealed. The hidden mystery was that they, Jews and Gentiles, should be one body in Christ, enjoying spiritual blessings in heavenly places, co-heirs with Christ. This can easily be seen in the perusal of Ephesians 3, compared with Colossians 1:26, 27, where it is Christ not come in displayed glory, but dwelling in them the hope of glory, that is, of heavenly glory. But God was in Christ here below, in the anointed One, according to the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. When God was acting on the ground of law, He imputed iniquity. As to the Gentiles, He passed by the times of ignorance, sin not being imputed where there was no law; Acts 17, Rom. 5. But God was in Christ

reconciling the world;94 such was one chief thing He was doing in Christ; a second was not imputing their sins; a third, committing the ministry of reconciliation to others, when the Saviour must needs return up on high, after having been made sin for us. Further, if God was at all times in Christ reconciling the world, how is it that God placed Himself in a new position towards the world, when the church knew it? According to Mr. Olivier, He always was in that position, only the world knew it not; and when it did know, it was the world which was in a new relationship to God (p. 47). But the word does not say that the church then knew that God had always been in Christ reconciling, but that the rejection of the Jews was the reconciliation of the world. The question is not whether those who heard the gospel are responsible for what they heard, but what is the responsibility of Christendom and of true Christians who find themselves therein? That is what concerns us, and of that nothing is said. I cannot understand either how a rejected gospel places them in a new relationship to God; they have committed a fresh sin; but they are not in a new relationship: they remain in their idolatry more guilty than before. I can only see in these pages confusion heaped upon confusion.

On the following pages taken from his first pamphlet I have only one remark to make: it is that to suppose as a general principle that the body cannot exist if there are yet other persons to be grafted into it, is mere self-deception. The apostle calls the assembly a body; that was the principle of the institution; nevertheless it was augmented every day by means of the joints and bands which minister nourishment, Eph. 4. The apostle had no idea that a body could not increase and finally arrive at

the point that the fulness of the Gentiles should be come in. An army can recruit itself and be always the army. I do not say the Gentiles were grafted in by the act of an altogether exterior dispensation. That which God had established pure, Satan, availing himself of the sleep of man, had spoiled. Those who had been grafted in did not abide faithful; Christendom is the result, and we must not confound all this with the reconciliation of the world, which is only in a special manner connected with it. Let me also recall to mind, that in setting up the kingdom of heaven the Sower recognizes no other field than the world; possibly all is not sown; but it is the object of His attention, the field of His toil and the scene of His judgments. The Lord speaks of it as a whole. That may be an abstraction, but it is the abstraction of the Spirit of God, received and understood by those who are spiritual. For the Spirit of God makes His thoughts to enter into those who are humble of heart; He conceals these things from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes.

Mr. Olivier finds it is a contradiction to make, on the one hand, the ways of God in the world, the starting point of the failure of the dispensation; and, on the other hand, to shew the failure of tfye church, as having for its starting point a so-called body of Christ. But the wisdom of man is not worth much. I speak thus of a body of Christ, because in Ephesians 4 the Spirit of God speaks of a body upon earth, increasing by that which joints and bands administer; and because I find in Jude also the point of departure, whence we arrive at a state which brings the judgments of God upon the wicked and rebellious, to be in this—that some have glided in among the children of God. Mr. Olivier questions their

responsibility: the fact is there; and he now admits that there is a strong presumption of this responsibility. The ways of God in the world form the point of departure in Matthew 13, and in Jude it is found in persons who have crept in among the faithful. One may consider the ways of God in the field of the Sower.; or one may consider, in a more detailed manner, and, so to speak, closer to the eye, the responsibility and the faults of those who were sown by the Lord in the field: the two things are equally true and important in their several places, instead of being contradictory.

I have but one word to say, in passing, upon the kingdom of heaven and the church. If those who compose the church and the kingdom were the same persons, and they have sinned, so that the kingdom has become Babylon, it matters little whether they sinned as bearing the character of the kingdom or of the church; they have brought in all the disorder. The sin and the errors of the children of God, even if they are not the corruption, are something else than the sun and the rain which are the occasion of it here below (see p. 61). Christians at least are guilty, even if the church be not—although a strong presumption of its responsibility is now admitted; and if the churches, true Christians in the churches, are guilty, then it is true Christians who were responsible for these things; and this is the great point. Further (p. 125), Mr. Olivier now admits the common responsibility of the church, of the true body of Christ, that which is composed of true Christians. Well, according to Mr. Olivier, these true Christians allowed persons to creep in that were not so, even evidently not so; if the churches (that is his way of presenting it, pp. 63, 64) have failed (and the common responsibility of the church is now

admitted), there they are together, after all, responsible in common for this sin, and responsible in common for the evil that has come in; and this is what I think. All my doctrine is admitted, all my thought is acknowledged to be true. I do not say that it has been formally admitted; but it is evident that if some Christians composing a church have done this evil, and if there is a common responsibility in the church, the church ought to feel itself responsible and guilty in this.

If even we had come to this result through a hundred instead of thirty-four contradictions, I feel too happy at having come to a good result, and if the truth be admitted, I shall not, as I have already said, stop to justify myself as to these thirty-four contradictions, which for my part I believe to be all a mere supposition. I leave all this in Mr. Olivier's hands, and in the hands of every one. The church is responsible in common as to the acts of its members; but some of the members, such or such churches, have failed, and have been the means of corrupting the kingdom, of producing the state of things where we find ourselves; therefore the Church is guilty of it, as being responsible in common for that which some of its members have done. This is the root of the whole controversy.

I do not know that I need say more on the subject we have treated. But in the word there are certain points connected with it, about which confusion of thought has been produced by what has been said during this discussion: interesting points touched upon, perhaps, for the first time, and from which one may derive real profit by examining them somewhat further.

For myself, I have learnt much while searching the Scriptures on the subject of the kingdom of heaven, as it was needful for me to do, in order to satisfy my mind on the point treated in this discussion. I find that the true idea presented in this expression is the reign of the heavens in the Person of the Son of man. John the Baptist put this forward in his testimony as “at hand.” The Lord did the same; yet still in the character of prophet. All this being rejected, it is the violent only who take it by force; so that it was not set up, and the Lord could say (though Himself actually present) “Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come,” Matt. 10:23. After that rejection was made manifest, and the Lord had pronounced judgment upon Israel at the close of chapter 12, the kingdom is preached as a mystery.95 After this it is established in mystery, but administered by Peter, who had the keys of it, when the King was ascended up into heaven. And, lastly, it will be made good, according to the power of its King, when Satan will be driven out of the heavenly places, and when Christ will receive the kingdom, and establish blessedness on the earth thereby.

Such is the summary of what I have found, and present to my brethren as such, evidently without any intention of controversy. The church, such as it is presented by Paul, does not come into mention here. In his writings it is presented as the body, the Bride of Christ, identified with Him in life as He is in heaven, in His nature, position, and glory. The administration of the kingdom is quite another thought. Paul may speak of the gathering together of the saints here below as a body, as the Bride, etc., because such was the extent of their privilege; of this we will speak shortly, but the thought which he

attaches to the church is its identification with Christ. At the death of Stephen, the administration, by the Spirit, of the kingdom of which Peter had the keys, was rejected at Jerusalem, as the announcement of the kingdom (in the testimony both of John the Baptist and of the Son of man) had already been, and from that time it ceased to be presented to the Jews as a people. Until then the Holy Spirit acted upon the ground of the intercession of Jesus upon the cross in their favour (compare Luke 23:34 and Acts 3:17), and as if the debt of ten thousand talents incurred by the death of Jesus had been remitted. The love of God still delayed to withdraw, and it is only in Acts 28 that He renounces His efforts towards that people, over the smallest remnant of which He ceased not to hover.

Nevertheless the Jews, ever setting themselves in opposition to the truth preached by Paul, and withstanding the preaching to the Gentiles according to the grace of God, filled up the measure of their sin, and wrath came upon them to the uttermost: they were sold with all that they possessed until payment should be made. From that point of time, the Gentiles are the subject of divine history. The Gentiles appear in the foreground, either as from attachment to their idols rejecting, or as receiving the testimony of grace which was proposed to them. Jerusalem trodden under foot by them, entirely disappears from the scene; and the iniquity and conduct of the Gentiles, such as it was, becomes the object of the judgment and actions of God. Meanwhile the Jews are as if buried (see Isa. 26; Ezek. 36), yet preserved, even as the Gentiles had previously been, as if not in being. It is evident that the Gentiles professing Christianity, and the Gentiles of the four

monarchies, subjected to the Beast, are the special though not sole objects of the ways of God in His government; but it is on the occasion of the destruction and judgment of these in particular, that the Son of man will establish His kingdom in power, although He will subject and judge all the others afterwards. Of this the prophecies of the Old and New Testament speak plainly enough.

I have now only one remark to make with regard to Mr. Olivier's system, which speaks of the corruption of the kingdom: this system still appears to me inadmissible. It still remains true that he makes Christ to be the King of Babylon: this is evidently untenable; but it is what he has done. He seeks to avoid its consequences, not by denying it, but by turning the argument against me, and saying, "What! you make Christ to be the Bridegroom and head of Babylon, the head of the corruption." My reply is, I have not done so; neither is it what I do now. First, I never said that Babylon was the church, or the church Babylon, as Mr. Olivier has said of the kingdom. I have not spoken of Babylon. I believe it has taken for a time the form of Christianity; but this is not in my judgment its sole or its exclusive form. Perhaps in the sixteenth century the reformers might be justified in speaking of it thus, because it was then the form that it took; but I think that there are other elements and other principles in Babylon. That is not the leading idea of Babylon in Scripture, although it may be an important element of it. But, alas! it is but too true that the church during the absence of Christ might be unfaithful in hei conduct, though espoused to Christ, but placed under responsibility until the marriage of the Lamb. If one cannot reconcile the thought of responsibility here

below with the accomplishment of the promises of God on high, one has much yet to learn as to the ways of God in reference to man; for the same thing is true of every Christian: evil is wrought before the church or the Christian is on high, come to perfection. Christ does not therefore cease to be the future husband of the church; and it is precisely when one ceases to recognize that relationship of bride of Christ, that the evil begins. Hence we have not to quit the church, but the church has to purify herself; for it ceases not to be the church although it has ceased to be faithful. But there is no question about purifying Babylon: it will be destroyed. If saints find themselves there, they must come out of it. Again, if it is the kingdom, they cannot come out of it. It is a complete confusion of ideas. There can be no question of coming out of the church.96 If it be said that in its captivity the members of the church are in Babylon (though this I did not say), it is the church, so to speak, which must come out of it. Finally, the idea that the church may have been unfaithful is quite intelligible; but that Christ should be King of Babylon is unintelligible. I admit that it is a thing to be proved that the church has been unfaithful, if the heart feels it not; but in that thought there is nothing unintelligible, and no contradiction; whilst the system which makes Christ to be the King of Babylon is mere nonsense.

And now I must revert a little to this point; but I hope to be brief. First, Mr. Olivier (p. 95) tells us that the practical sense in which Scripture speaks to us of the church upon earth is rather the church as it appears to man, than that which it is in the sight of God—I say then, be it so; but then what a door is opened here for uncertainty, after what has occurred in the history of

Christianity!97 But I ask, “Appears to whom?” To Mr. Olivier. But to Mohammedans, to the heathen, it is Christendom which appears to be the church. If one says, Such is not the fact: this requires the judgment of spiritual persons, I say, “Stop a moment. Do you deny that the church was set up as a testimony to the world? that it ought to have been the epistle of Christ? and also one in order that the world might believe?” That which to the world98appears to be the church has then a very great importance in the sight of God. He is jealous for the glory of His Son. And if that which bears His name upon earth, that which appears to be the church in the sight of the heathen world, dishonours Him, and belies all that He is, instead of preaching Him, and if this is nowhere remedied, it is a fact of the most solemn moment touching that which appears to be the church, and which presents the name of the Son to the world in the sight of God. And such in the sight of God in the world is the fact. What appears to be the church is an abomination— is not the church; it is, if you will, the work of the enemy;99 nevertheless it is the testimony rendered to the Son of God. Some will not have it that what presents itself thus should be called the church. It is quite right to undeceive men’s minds upon the point, I fully admit; yet in the sense which is perhaps the most important, and certainly the most important as to judgment and the government of God, it is what appears to be the church. God may for the sake of some righteous still spare, at least until the tares be ripe; but the vintage of God will not be of the fruits of His grace— it is the winepress of His wrath.

But let us consider now the judgment of the spiritual. What is it appears to be the church? Whom shall I

consult? Christians in national establishments? What appears even to the most enlightened among them to be the church? They will tell me that the Epistle to the Corinthians is a proof that Mr. Olivier and all of us together are entirely deceived on the subject of the church. Mr. Rochat would take it quite in another way, and Mr. Olivier would be greatly disconcerted to be identified with him, as if they had one view about the church. I believe indeed that the remark is perfectly just, that the word of God calls that the church which appears to be the church; but this causes that now there is nothing in exterior appearance which corresponds to that which is inward, to the true church, to the assembly of the elect. We can use the word church according to what appears to be the church, and there will be nothing which is accurately true, because, alas! the church does not appear at all, unless we call that the church of which an unbeliever could say that “its annals were the annals of hell.” This I at least would avoid doing; yet the words of Mr. Olivier shew us where we are in this respect; and the children of God—have they no burden upon their hearts on account of this? No; I will not say upon the consciences; I will make no appeal on this subject to the conscience. “Where is the flock that was given thee, saith the Lord, thy beautiful flock?” (See Jer. 13:20, 21.) And the Christian flock, the flock of God now—is it less precious to Him? Will the bride of Christ have no concern for the glory of her Bridegroom?

But can one speak thus? Is it right to speak thus of the body upon earth, or to say “this pretended body”? It is an important point as to responsibility. Can we speak of responsibility? First, let us bear in mind that the common responsibility of all the members of the church

at all times is acknowledged. This is evidently of all importance. Further, in the practical sense the word of God calls that the church which the church appears to be in the sight of men. Well we speak in this sense with the word, admitting at the same time that there may be therein hypocrites who will never be in heaven. Still the passages I have already cited speak distinctly of the church upon earth. Timothy had need to know how to conduct himself in the church of the living God. The Lord added to the church. The Lord “hath set some in the church, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that miracles; then gifts of healing; helps; governments; diversities of tongues,” 1 Cor. 12. He gave them as joints and bands which might serve for the edification of the body “until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”: and by their means the body receives from the Head its increase, Eph. 4.

An effort is sometimes made to invalidate the force of these express declarations of the word by means of a comparison. The church is spoken of, it is said, as detachments of the army; but this is not correct. It is an army which recruits itself, but which is not thereby the less constantly the army as a body. Mr. Olivier thinks the idea ridiculous of a body to which one adds; but Ephesians 4 expressly speaks of a body which increases according to the vigour of each part: so that which is found fault with is really the idea and expression of the word itself. And when John said, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come,” certainly this is not when the church is in heaven with her Bridegroom—was that man of God right? Can one go farther than to call the church, such

as it was upon the earth at the commencement, the bride of Christ? Mr. Olivier may say, “I do not recognise one body: it is ridiculous; I know no such thing as the church, it is but a pretended church” (see pp. 49, 125, etc.). With much more reason he might have said, “How the bride? It was but a little portion of the bride.” Nevertheless, the word of God calls that which was then found upon the earth “Body,” “Church,” “Bride”; and the children of God would do better to speak according to the word than to follow the reasonings of the human mind, however wise they may seem to be. The inconsistencies of the word of God are more true than the most palpable deductions made by the intelligence of man, because the word is truth, and has no need of deductions. When we read it we need faith; but here I admit one thing, namely, that when the word of God uses these expressions (and this remark has some importance), it speaks always of the privileges and blessings of the church, because, while placing in that position the mass of living believers, it speaks in view of the final result; but this by no means prevents this glory, in so far as manifested by the Holy Spirit, being confided to these believers, and that Christians should be responsible for it.

And here it may be well to strip the word “responsible” of much of the mist with which men like to envelop it. It has been said, we are not responsible for the acts of our fathers. The one common responsibility is admitted; I do not again revert to it. But further, the question is not only about the acts of such or such an individual. I confide my house to someone, forbidding him to admit to it any save my servants; he, a lover of society, in the very act of entering upon the responsibility of this charge,

admits all sorts of persons, and the house is thereby altogether injured, and its appearance spoiled. He will say that he is not responsible for their acts, but he is responsible for the state of the house which I entrusted to him. It may be he has wished to prevent others, when they were doing what spoiled the house: this will not satisfy me, my house is spoiled, my confidence has been abused, and he, to whose care I left it, is responsible for the evil; that is, that he ought to give me back the house such as I had entrusted it to him. It is very important to seize this thought. The glory of the name of Christ, the results of His victory over Satan and over the effects of his power, such were the blessings trusted as a precious deposit to the church; which was by its very position the witness of this. You are the letter of Christ, says the apostle; not the letters, but the letter. There is no need of discussing the particular acts of which the church may have been guilty; it ought to have guarded that which was committed to it. It was the pillar and ground of the truth; in a word, the glory of Christ was confided to it here below. Has it been faithful?

Here I must say a word on the subject of responsibility, and on the difference of that responsibility according as it is viewed in connection with eternal judgment, or with the judgment of God here below. Here is where I find one of the contradictions of which I am accused. Mr. Olivier makes me say (p. 123), on the one hand, that we inherit and are responsible for the acts of sin of those who went before us, and, on the other hand, that we are responsible for the state in which we find ourselves, and not for the acts of Christians who lived before us. But the words, “and are responsible,” in the first phrase, are added by Mr. Olivier.100 I perceive that he wishes to

avail himself of this other passage which he quotes, “I know very well that one would not have it that man is responsible for an evil which existed before he was born … but the government of God in the world does not proceed thus,” etc. Here are the words left out, as indicated thus by dots… “It is true that, as to the final judgment of the individual, each shall bear his own burden; but,” etc. It is just these words that make all the difference.

I wish to explain myself on this point, because it is important that all Christians should understand it. I have already said something about it in my pamphlets. That each is individually responsible for his conduct, and that each shall give an account of himself to God, is a principle upon this subject generally recognised, and I need not enlarge upon it. “Each of us,” says the apostle, “shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:12)— “Each shall bear his own burden” (Gal. 6:5) — “God will render to each according to his works in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel “(Rom. 2:6:16); but that is not the government of God in the world. In this God acts often towards masses, on the general result which the whole presents in His sight, and even in the sight of the world, if it is His people who should render a testimony for Him; for without this God would be identified with the evil, and His very character would be compromised. He can sustain while chastening; but, as He said of Israel, the nations shall know that Israel is gone into captivity, because of their sins. Sometimes the sin of a chief person, who draws others after him, but who himself is the most culpable, brings judgment upon his posterity and upon his people. “Notwithstanding the

Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal," 2 Kings 23:26.

On the other hand, one sees the world suffering the consequences of the sins of their fathers; the heathen are living witnesses of it. God gave them up to a reprobate mind, Rom. 1:17. Thus we may easily see that we ought accurately to distinguish between the eternal judgment of God and His judicial government of the world; for in reference to His eternal judgment it is said of the Gentiles— "those who have sinned without law shall perish without law … in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Rom. 2:12, 16)—the gospel which Paul preached. As to the government of the world, it is said, as to the same Gentiles, "The times of this ignorance God winked at"; for in truth, sin is not reckoned where there is no law. Nevertheless death and sin reigned. Here man inherited the guilt of his fathers, while, in present government, they were not held responsible for their own acts: they were so, indeed, as to eternity, according to the light they had neglected. When God puts Himself in relationship with any people, and places a testimony in the midst of them in such sort that the light of the testimony is cast upon the sin they commit, and in which they continue to walk in spite of the testimony, then God brings, according to His government here below, judgment of all that sin upon the generation which fills up the measure of the evil, so that there is no more room for patience.

As witnesses of this, see the Jews who rejected Christ and the testimony of the Holy Spirit: all the blood which

had been shed since the blood of righteous Abel had to be required of that generation. God had not required it before; He had enlightened them by His law, stirred them up by His prophets, warned them by chastisements, had made an appeal to their whole moral being by the mission of His Son. The very sins of the fathers ought to have been a warning to their children to avoid the same offences, because, after the sins of the fathers, their offences were committed in the light. But they persisted therein, and thus heaped up wrath for the day of judgment; and they had to submit to the consequences of all this, according to the just judgment of God. This in no wise prevents each of their fathers having been and being subject, at the judgment of the dead, to the consequences of his own individual sin; but the nation, the system as a whole, the public object of the government of God in the world has been judged.

If there were among the faithful those that bemoaned the evil, they were transferred into another system; in like manner, the just of preceding ages will enjoy the effects of their faithfulness in the world to come. And, as a matter of fact, the sin of a son, who sins after his father, is greater than that of his father, because, if there is light in my heart, as it shines in the system in the midst of which I live, the sight of the sin will act powerfully on my conscience—will produce a horror of the sin thus committed in the sight of God, and I shall avoid it, astonished that anyone can act thus, as a man does who sees another walk in the mire or fall over a precipice. If I persevere in the sin of my father, I am more culpable than he, in that his sin was a warning to me; my sin is double, is morally augmented by all the effect which his sin ought to have produced to deter me;

that is to say, by the amount of what his sin was in the sight of God; for we suppose the case of those who have light and the testimony of God. My sin is augmented by the very amount of his, although he will be equally responsible for what he has done; also, it is evident that my heart in this case is hardened by reason of the sin of my father, whom I have seen, or whom I ought to have seen, in the light of God granted to me, Ezek. 23:11; 2 Chron. 34:19, etc.; Jer. 11:15.

This is what we see of the judgments of God in Israel. Only we may add that God, in His goodness, has constantly renewed His testimony, and that, in His patience, He has sent His prophets, rising up early, as it is said, to send them until there was no remedy (see Jer. 7); and lastly, His own Son. The consequence has been, as we have already said, that all the righteous blood, from Abel to Zacharias, came upon the generation which filled up the measure of the iniquity of their fathers in rejecting the last witness of God, Matt. 13:35. We see here sin inherited and the people held, as to the government of God, responsible for the sins of their fathers; for their sins were morally the accumulation of all those that went before, and which God had borne with, according to the patience which they had despised, and of which they availed themselves to plunge more deeply into evil.101 (See also Dan. 5:18-23.) It is clear that this consideration may augment the sin of an individual; but this prevents not the other great principle of the government of God as to those who bear His name or who enjoy the light He gives, or who are found (in consequence, perhaps, of their own pride, and the blinding of Satan) in the position, or pretending to

enjoy the position, in which God has placed His own. (See, for instance, Jer. 23, Matt. 24:48, etc.)

We may add that the judgment of God is according to the iniquity of the people; He brings upon them their iniquity. (Compare Jer. 5:21 and Isa. 6:9, and other passages, as 2 Thess. 2:10, 11.) Now the Spirit of God applies this general principle to Babylon in the Revelation. In her is found all the blood which has been shed upon the earth. The judgment of God renders her responsible for all that which has been done from the beginning, and the apostles and prophets are called to rejoice at the vengeance God takes upon her.

These apostles and prophets had no relationship with her; but the Babylon of the last day will inherit and will be responsible for the evil under which the apostles suffered. Yet each one shall answer for his own sin committed at the beginning or at the end of the ages, although (as we have already said) the individual sin may be aggravated by the perseverance in the same sin, or may be, on the other hand, less grave from defect of light. That the culpability of Babylon is real no one who knows and honours God will call in question.102 Such are the clear examples we have of this principle in the government of God, of holding a system responsible for all evil which has been wrought during the whole existence of that which precedes it, whose privileges or even greater ones it inherited. We inherit the guilt of those who went before us, and we are judged responsible for the whole. As to the individual, he will have to bear the judgment of that which he has done.

I now close. I thought that I ought not to reply to Mr. Olivier’s pamphlet; but it appeared to me that a few

words on Romans n and upon the government of God, distinguishing it from individual responsibility, might help in the edification of my brethren. I feel a certain regret that some pages of what I have said on Romans 11 present so much the form of a reply; but this had become necessary, because many were already occupied with these things in that point of view; it was therefore meeting their wants. It has not however, I trust, hindered the development of the subject (quite apart from the controverted points) nor the introduction of thoughts as to the position of the church, the difference between the life of Christ (the eternal life which was with the Father), and the inheritance of promise which He has taken as seed of Abraham, and on the relation of the church with the Father, on the one hand, and with the administration of His promises on the other. These thoughts are, it seems to me, more important aids to the progress of the children of God, than even the leading subject of the discussion. Yet I am perfectly assured, that if any one come to recognise the unity of the church upon earth and its responsibility in that unity, it will make a marked distinction between those who receive that truth and those who, I will not say, are still ignorant of it, but who reject it. I believe that God is at this time acting upon the church by these truths; that it is these truths which, in the sight of Christ, bring out the faithfulness of heart which He desires. I am sure that neither nationalism nor dissent can bear with them; and the more they are discussed, the more do I feel that they are, as to faithfulness, the great truths for the day in which we live. I do not doubt that those who reject them will still seek to represent them as secondary truths; but all that I see in this is a snare of Satan, from which I hope many souls will be delivered. These truths are

connected with the presence of the Holy Spirit upon earth, who gives unity to the body here below. It is because they are truths, that the church can, as espoused to Christ, say to the Bridegroom, Come! and he who denies them, denies at the same time the special privileges which link the church to Christ, as well as the responsibility which flows thence, and to which the heart will adhere, that it may not renounce so precious a tie. Only let those who enjoy these things remember that the task laid upon us in our ministry of love, according to that which is entrusted to us, is to give meat in due season. This is charity: it thinks not of our own ideas, but of the need of the souls we meet with.

Ever keep, brethren beloved, according to this charity, the doctrine which is connected with the cross and resurrection of Jesus—the justification of the believer and of the church; and seek to awaken the church from her torpor, by the doctrine of her position as the bride of the Lamb—one and beloved. Take for a banner this testimony of the Spirit— “The Spirit and the bride say, Come!” such is the desire, which comes out of the fulness of the heart. Encourage in grace (for this is all in grace) those who hear, but who have not the persuasion of being the bride of Christ, to come and join their cry to yours and to say with you, Come! And certainly if the heart has entered into the love of Christ in secret, the same Spirit which has made you taste the joy of His love, will make you turn toward the world, and say in the consciousness of that joy and of the possession of those living waters, “And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

The same Spirit which makes us enjoy Christ and desire His coming, urges us to call others to the same

enjoyment. In fact, this verse (Rev. 22:17) is the expression of the position of the church and of the presence of the Holy Spirit; but it has been left to her as a last testimony, on the part of the Lord, in order to define that position.

The thought of the coming of Christ and the persuasion of our obligations to Him, as Bridegroom, give to our souls and to our testimony an energy which nought else could give. He who recognises the Holy Spirit down here, soul of the unity of the church which is the body and bride of Christ, witness of His glory on high, and consequently ardently—yes, ardently— desiring His return, will not cease on this account to enjoy that third great truth which is the foundation of the others—Christ delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. On the contrary, he will enjoy it the more, he will understand it the better. But to avail oneself of the last named truth in order to deny the others, is at least to provoke God to take from us the strength even of that which we desire to retain.

May Christians, then, plainly understand what is in question, namely, the existence, unity, and responsibility of the church of God, of the bride of Christ on earth; and may those who believe these things use them, not as a means of judging others, but of encouraging them in grace, as those who hear, to come and hasten by their sighs the return of the Bridegroom. As for him who opposes these things, after having heard the cry of the Spirit and of the bride, whosoever he be, he will bear his own burden.

85 Lausanne, 1844.

86 Mr. Olivier has taken up this expression, as if I had spoken of the body of Christ; but one may speak of a body, without speaking of the body of Christ.

87 It is plain that even when the responsibility is one common among many, the responsibility presses upon the individual.

88 The two truths with which this question connects itself are: the return of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church; for the Holy Spirit has come down to earth, and this it is which gives to the church its unity and corporate responsibility upon earth. It is with the church as with a human body, all the component parts of which are said to be entirely renewed in a very short period of time, yet the individual remains the same man: the spirit of man which is in him attaches vitally to itself, and appropriates successively new heterogeneous elements, and the unity and the person change not.

There are three great truths which are connected with Christ, the centre of all truth, or, if you please, three different positions in which He is seen: dead and risen; then in heaven (with this corresponds, as its proof, the presence of the Holy Spirit upon earth, John 16); and lastly, His return down here. Dead and risen—thus is the church, His body, justified, risen with Him. Such is the doctrine of justification; and although it is evidently true as to the whole church, considered as a body, yet in its application day by day, and for each conscience, it is an individual matter for each. The Holy Spirit dwells as the seal of this doctrine in the body of an individual as in a temple. Then in heaven Jesus is hid in God, yet crowned with honour and glory; the doctrine which thence flows is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church upon

earth,* in His body; of the Holy Spirit who gives to this body its unity, and makes the terms “body of Christ”— “bride of Christ”— “church of Christ” to be applicable to those who, upon earth, are united to Him who is in heaven, and who thus form a unity upon earth; the dead in Christ being for the moment out of sight. If this is understood (for one may be converted and not understand it), one desires, as bride of Christ, the return of the Bridegroom. Justification is connected with His death and resurrection; for we know that His work has been accepted on high. The unity of the church, and her waiting for Christ as is becoming for a faithful bride— this it is which is connected with the glory of Christ on high, and the presence of the Holy Spirit down here. These are the two great truths which have been specially put forward, which, as I believe, God Himself has put forward at the present moment, and which have produced so much disquietude in those who desire to remain without the sphere of their influence—whether in the national churches or in dissent. That there should be ignorance of these things, one can well understand; that there should be opposition to them is indeed sad; but to say that these truths are secondary is utterly to deceive oneself. To make little account of the glory of Christ manifested in the unity of the church here below is, in truth, a proof that that glory and the love of Christ for His church are not dear to the heart, and therefore offers little opportunity of speaking to the conscience. If after having urged upon a son his duty towards a tender and affectionate father, and having explained to him the nature of filial affection, he should ask one to trace out accurately his duty, one might well refuse; he has not the mind to understand his position: the request is the request of a hireling. The feeling must be awakened if

conscience is to act; but woe, woe to him in whom it does not exist!

* Note to translation.—It is not exact to say, dwells “in the body.” It is in the house, as Ephesians 2, not the body, which is in Ephesians 1. It is just the same with regard to the responsibility of the church, the grace of the relationship must be owned, and it is the heart taught by the Holy Spirit which understands it. I doubt not that there is enough to condemn, by means of the conscience itself, him who thus fails; but to do so is neither my task nor my desire. If the heart could be awakened so as to feel the force of this relationship, of this obligation— that would be the most precious fruit of all the conflict in which I have had to engage on these points. Israel might have been condemned by the law; but is not the appeal of God much stronger, and Israel much more hardened, not to have replied to it, when it is said, and said in vain, “Go yet, love a woman beloved of (her) friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel”? For, as the first principle is love, if that fails, all fails. I admit, and I always have admitted, that one may understand the love which saves without knowing that the church is the bride of Christ; but under existing circumstances, this it is which the Holy Spirit in a peculiar way calls to mind: “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.” Such is the normal position, such the primary testimony which the church renders. After that, it can turn towards others and say, “And let him that is athirst come,” for living waters already flow there; “and whosoever will,” etc. But for Christians this is the Spirit’s last behest to the church pointing out her true position. Her sentiments are based upon her

relationships to Christ, and the Spirit demands that those who hear should be in unison with this desire of His heart. Is it wrong to engage those who have heard the voice of the good Shepherd, to take the position of the bride and to join in the cry, “Come”?

But the doctrines of the presence of the Holy Spirit here below in the Church, and of the return of Christ, are identified with its unity upon earth, with the position of bride, or rather of her who here below is espoused to be presented as a chaste virgin unto Christ, and with the desire of His coming, which detaches us from all that is not of Him, and attaches us entirely, exclusively, to Himself.

It is easy to understand how those who are in national establishments feel themselves troubled by such a truth. They have quite another sort of unity; and, as to them, division is that which separates from what is really union with the world and subjection to another than Christ. That dissenters—who, faithful in separating from that which is contrary to the precepts of the gospel have made churches, though they have never apprehended, but contrariwise have rejected, the idea of the church upon earth—should be opposed to it, this also is intelligible enough. But it ought not to enfeeble the power of these two great truths upon our hearts, nor alienate us from them. Division in the latter case is sometimes in appearance less reasonable, because the evil among them is less gross than elsewhere, but they have not accepted, and still do refuse to accept these truths. They have no influence upon their manner of acting. That there should be patience there can be no doubt; but that these two immense truths should not produce effects, that they should leave those who

oppose them in tranquillity—will never be the case. It is well for brethren, and even for those who oppose, to understand what really is in question. Hitherto the unity and the responsibility of the church have been denied. The return of Christ has had no practical effect upon the opponents of these doctrines. Scarcely are they even now recognised as being strongly probable—which is not such a conviction as can furnish a motive for conduct; while all the affections of the church ought to be formed upon, and her walk regulated by, these doctrines, while awaiting Christ's return.

I find two things presented in the word as the great means of judging of the state of the people of God:1st, the comparing it with the state in which God placed them at the first; 2nd, with the glory of Christ who is about to return. Compare Isaiah 5 for the first and chapter 6 for the second.

89 This is one of the supposed contradictions, which I should feel ashamed to consider before Christian brethren. Once more, I do not take them up; if I did so, I should have to say some severe things.

90 If the question were about a warning to brethren in Christ as members of the Church, and not about the earthly administration of the economy, how could it be said that the Gentiles were grafted into the place, or into the midst of the Jews? The Jews and the Gentiles were grafted or admitted together; but when speaking about the tree of promise, and the ways of God toward this tree of promise here below, then the Holy Spirit may well speak of the cutting off of branches, because the tree remains always and necessarily there, whatsoever in other respects might be its form in detail. This is

really the subject of the chapter, and not the church properly so called. Then, also, in like manner, the Gentiles might be, and were grafted into the place of the dry branches which were cut out; in the meanwhile the green branches, which remained in the tree, of necessity took the form of the dispensation of grace, the mould in which the promises were now cast. It will be the same with the Gentile world; all those who have professed the name of Christ, except the elect, will be cut off—the others will be in heaven—and the dispensation of the promises upon earth will again take the Jewish form; yet according to the new covenant, and in blessing upon the Gentiles also, under the reign of the Son of man. The truth is, it was not only the law which applied to man upon earth, but the promises also of God revealed in the word before the manifestation of His Son, of the eternal life which was with the Father and has been manifested to us. These promises, I say, reached not to the heavens either: they were given since the foundation of the world, had reference to the world, and must be fulfilled upon earth. Even the resurrection itself, concealed as it was in the declaration, “I am the God of Abraham,” etc., presented no distinct revelation of heaven. The promise of eternal life given to us in Christ before the world was, was not of this world, and is not fulfilled here, although we are possessed of it while here in pilgrimage; the life, according to which we enjoy it, existed before the world was, the life of the Word, the life of Christ. This is the life of the church, and what was revealed in order that the church might exist: but it must needs, here below, equally take the position of the seed of promise, that is, though its life is the life which Christ had before the world was made, it must needs, at the same time, be placed in the position of heir of the promise here below.

But how does it take that place? In that it is united to Christ (to Him who, while indeed having divine and eternal life in Himself, is the true Seed of Abraham), and in that it is made partaker of His life. As partaker of His life, it expects heavenly things, the same glory with Him; but in that it has that life, it is placed upon the same root, is introduced into the position of the heirs of the promise here below, of the seed of Abraham, according to the promise, because Christ, although He had the life of God in Himself, deigned to place Himself there. By the possession of that life, it is properly speaking the church* (whether composed of Jews or Gentiles matters not); but as introduced into the position of the seed of Abraham and heir of the promise here below, it is sustained by the root. The branches grafted in take the place of those which had been cut off. It is the administration of the promises here below which is treated of; and it is in this latter point of view that the subject is looked at in this eleventh chapter. When I say that the promises made to Abraham do not go beyond this world, I mean not to say that Abraham or any other such had not the enjoyment of other things in his soul; but it was not in such things that the promises by the which he was called through faith consisted. It is only when he entered Canaan, the land of promise, where he possessed nought, that his heart by faith rose higher; Heb. 11:8, 9; Acts 7:5.

As to us we are called by a testimony to heavenly things; it is in heaven that the church in spirit finds herself; in the meantime we are the seed of Abraham and heirs according to promise. There it is, that the administration of God as to His promises and His ways towards Israel enters into the account, even for the church; and it is

about this that the chapter treats, and not of the promise of life given before the world was. Therefore it is that He speaks of cutting off the branches grafted in amid others, of grafting in afresh the branches which had been cut off, of the Gentiles, of the people beloved although enemies as concerning the gospel, etc. To distinguish these things, and the government of God which flows thence and is connected therewith, from the power of eternal life in Jesus Christ, is of all importance for the understanding of the word.

* Note to Translation.—It should be, properly speaking, Christian. The church was formed by baptism of the Holy Ghost. Otherwise all is right.

91 I again make use of this word, because it is very much used, and understood by all; every one will continue to speak of the Levitical economy, and the Christian economy, when this controversy is closed, just as before it began.

92 Here, again, it is evident that the question is not concerning individuals as to salvation, but the administration of the promises, for as many as remained in unbelief had stumbled that they should fall.

93 Note to translation.—I have expunged a sentence here, as being a misinterpretation of Acts 3:25.

94 Not imputing, and not only simply passing by.

95 Hence the Lord presents Himself now as sowing; He seeks not fruit from the vine: all had to begin.

96 No one has ever seen Babylon in the church, even if they may have spoken of the church in Babylon (which, however, I have not done).

97 It is of no use to say here—the whole of the elect—for they are known only by means of what is seen; there are, moreover, many who would deny that there is such a thing in the sense in which the word is here used.

98 It is to the eyes of the world that it ought to appear; if it had continued faithful, the question could not possibly have existed for the spiritual man. He was a member of it; he had no need to judge about it.

99 When Henry Martyn was at Shiraz in Persia, a Mahommedan said he was sure he was not a Christian, because he lived near to God; for he had seen the Christians at Calcutta, and they were the most wicked men possible. I myself have had the same sorrow when wishing to preach the gospel to the captains of merchant ships who sailed to and from the Levant. They told me they made no great account of one religion more than another, that they had found Turks much more upright and honourable in their dealings than Christians. It is useless to say they were not Christians. We speak of the testimony rendered to the world.

100 I must add that he does not repeat the words: “when it is a question of His government with regard to an economy.”

101 Moreover, God was forced, as to His public government in the world, to impute everything, for His name was named upon the people. He became, so to speak, responsible together with them for all the sin which His people committed, if He did not judge it. It was His glory to exercise patience, but not to permit for ever sin among the people with whom He was identified, and it is plain then, that it is the sin of the people which must needs be punished, just as the sin of my son

accumulates by reason of my patience. It is not the last fault which I punish in the end, but my son, and this because of all the evil which I have borne with up to that time, and which is even enhanced by reason of my patience. It is thus with the people of God.

102 As to Babylon, we find it active in corrupting; it makes the nations drunk. If Israel corrupted itself instead of keeping the law, Babylon corrupted instead of acting in love and truth. The people of God are found in her, and are in danger of sharing in her sins. To me it is evident that, while pride and idolatry are indeed the very root, its iniquity is the result of contempt and abandonment of all the light of God, from Noah to the church, as also of the testimony of the last days. Its heart is then full of all the iniquity of man, in the presence of all the light of God, and of all the privileges of those that are His in Christ, and having knowledge of it all. It will, in fact, be the activity of Satan; but as to men and their responsibility, it will falsify and deny all the relations based upon the revelations of God. The “Beast” is another thing; it contends with the power of the Son of man, with Christ. It is not the complete corruption of man in things which, in principle, he held from God.

## On Discipline

[It is well to note that this short paper, printed from notes of a discourse at a meeting (1841), refers to the spirit animating the individual in dealing with evil. The putting evil out is assumed; as the word of God expressly commands it. We are bound to keep God's house clean, to look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest there be amongst us such or such, to judge them that are within, and put out the wicked. But this is a proving of ourselves to be clean. God will have the place of His dwelling clean. The question of withdrawing from evildoers, a positive commandment of the word, is not touched. The object of the tract is the spirit in which discipline is to be exercised.]

We ought to remember what we are in ourselves, when we talk about exercising discipline—it is an amazingly solemn thing. When I reflect, that I am a poor sinner, saved by mere mercy, standing only in Jesus Christ for acceptance, in myself vile, it is, evidently, an awful thing to take discipline into my own hands. Who can judge save God? This is my first thought.

Here I stand, as nothing, in the midst of persons dear to the Lord, whom I must look upon and esteem better than myself, in the consciousness of my own sinfulness and nothingness before the Lord; and to talk of exercising discipline!—it is a very solemn thought indeed to my own mind; it presses on me peculiarly. Only one thing gets me out of that feeling, and that is the prerogative of love. When love is really in exercise, it cares for nothing but the accomplishment of its object. Look at it in the Lord Jesus, no matter what stood in the

way, on He went. This is the only thing that can rightly relieve the spirit from the sense of an altogether false position in the exercise of discipline. The moment I get out of that, it is a monstrous thing. Though the subject-matter of conduct be righteousness, that which sets it going is love—love in exercise, to secure, at all cost of pain to itself, the blessing of holiness in the church. It is not a position of superiority in the flesh. (See Matt. 23:8-11.) The character of discipline as “master” we have not at all. Though influenced by love to maintain righteousness, and stimulated to a jealous watchful care one over another, we must ever remember that, after all, “to his own master” our brother “standeth or falleth,” Rom. 14:4. Love alone guides it, and the service of love displays it. We do see that character of discipline in the Lord Jesus, when He took a scourge of small cords to drive out the desecrators of the temple (Matt. 21; John 2); but it was anticipative of another character of Christ, when He will execute judgment.

There are two or three kinds of discipline, full of comfort as shewing the association of the individual with the whole body, and with God, which have been ordinarily confounded amongst Christians.

There is, in this country, a great deal more difficulty connected with the question of discipline, than elsewhere, because of certain habits of action, whereby discipline has come to be looked at merely as a deliberative and judicial act. Persons have been voluntarily associated, and there has been a habit of legislating for the credit of the voluntarily associated body. Because people must secure themselves, each society makes its own rules. Now that principle is as far from the truth as the world from the church, or light

from darkness. One cannot admit of any principle of voluntary association at all, or of preservative rules of one's own. Man's will is that which brings in everlasting destruction. It may be modified, but the principle is altogether false. There is no such thing as voluntary action on man's part, in the things of God; it is acting under Christ, by the Spirit. The moment I get man's will, I get the devil's service and not Christ's. This has occasioned a mass of practical difficulty, that those abroad do not feel. When I get the notion of a judicial process going on, for the trial of crime, by certain laws, I find myself altogether off the ground of grace; I have confounded all sorts of things.

The developed statement of Matthew 18:15-17, though often cited, does not seem to touch the matter. It is a question of wrong done to a brother; and it is never said, concerning the one who has done the wrong, that the church is to put him out; but, "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." This may have to be the case, as to the church subsequently, but it is not its character here; it is simply, "Let him be unto thee" etc.—have nothing more to do with him. It supposes a case of wrong done to an individual, as in the trespass-offering, where it is said, "If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, and lie unto his neighbour," etc.103 There is the sovereignty of grace to forgive, even to the "seventy times seven"; but "thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbour, and not surfer sin upon him." An individual has wronged me: how am I to act? I go not to the Father's discipline, nor to the Son's discipline over His own house; but, acting towards him in the love of the brotherhood, I go and say, "Brother, thou hast done me wrong," etc. There is, first of all, this remonstrance

in righteousness; yet the path is such that it may not get out of the scope of grace. Having done this, if he will not hear me, I take with me one or two more, “that in the mouth of two or three witnesses,” etc. If that fails, I then tell it to the whole assembly. If he refuse to hear the church, “Let him be unto thee,” etc. The thing prescribed is a course of individual conduct, and the result, individual position towards another. It may come to a case of church discipline, but not necessarily. I go hoping to gain my brother to repentance, to replace him in his right relation in fellowship with myself and God (where there is failure in brotherly love, it necessarily affects communion with the Father): if my brother is gained, it goes no farther; it ought never to pass my lips; the church knows nothing of it, or any other creature, but we two. If there is failure, I act to restore him in fellowship to all.

As to the discipline of the Father, there is a great deal more of individual prerogative of grace in this. I doubt whether it comes under the care of a body of Christians at all; it is the exercise of individual care. I do not see that the church stands in the place of the Father. The idea of superiority is true in a certain sense; there is difference of grace as well as of gift. If I have more holiness, I must go and restore my brother, Gal. 6:1. But then this individual action in grace is not church discipline. It is most important to keep these things clear and distinct, so that, while one is quite ready to be subject to the two or three, individual energy should not be at all restrained, but remain clear and untouched. The Holy Ghost must have all His liberty. I could suppose a case where an individual had to go and rebuke all round, as Timothy, “Reprove, rebuke, exhort

with all long-suffering," etc., 2 Tim. 4:2. That is discipline; but the church has nothing to do with it, it is individual action.

But again, the church may be forced to exercise discipline, as in the case of the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 5. The Corinthians were not the least prepared to exercise discipline; but the apostle insists upon their doing so. There is that which is the individual exercise of the energy of the Spirit in the ministry of grace and truth, and the like, on the souls of others; and church action not at all involved. It is a mischief to make church discipline the only discipline. It would be a most awful thing if it were necessary to bring every evil before all. It is not the tendency of charity to bring evil into public: "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." If it sees a brother sin a sin which is not unto death, it goes and prays for him; and the sin may never come out as a question of church discipline at all. I believe there is never a case of church discipline but to the shame of the whole body. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul says, "Ye have not mourned," etc.: they all were identified with it. Like some sore on a man's body, it tells of the disease of the body, of the constitutional condition. The assembly is never prepared, or in the place to exercise discipline, unless having first identified itself with the sin of the individual. If it does not do it in that way, it takes a judicial form, which will not be the ministration of the grace of Christ. Christ has not yet taken His full judicial place. The moment it comes to that, the saying— "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still," etc., the church has departed from its place altogether. Its priestly character in the present dispensation is one of grace.

What is the character of fatherly care and discipline? How does the father exercise it? Is it not because he is the father? He is not in the same place as the child. This is the principle of it. There is one superior in grace and wisdom; he sees another going wrong in judgment, and he goes and says to him, “I was once there,” etc.— “do not go and do so and so.” It is entreaty and exposing the circumstances in love; though, in case of hardness, rebuke may come in. The father can make all allowance for weakness and inexperience, as having passed through the same himself. Make yourself ever so much the servant, the principle of the father must be maintained; and it is a principle of individual superiority, however accompanied by grace. All the world should not stop me. It is the prerogative of individual love, to say, “Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.” It flows from the father’s love, and leads me to the other, not to let him go on wrong, for love’s sake. It is not a case of trespass against me, but a case of walk or conduct against his place as a child. We fail, because we do not like to go through the pain and trouble of it. If a saint gets into trouble, he is Christ’s sheep; and I am bound, in whatsoever way I can, to seek to get him out of it. He may say, “What business have you to come?” and the like; but I ought to go and lay myself at his feet, in order to get him out of the net which he has got into, even though he dislike me for it. This needs the spirit of grace, and the seeking to bear the whole on one’s own soul.

The other kind of discipline is that of Christ, as Son “over his own house.” The case of Judas is of great value here. It will always be, that, if there is spirituality in the body, evil cannot continue long; it is impossible that

hypocrisy, or anything else, should continue, where there is spirituality. In the case of Judas, the Lord's personal grace overcame everything; and it will always be so, proportionably, and practically. The highest manifestation of evil was against this grace—"he that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me… He then, having received the sop" (grace thoroughly came out, when the evil was shewn to be done against Himself), "went immediately out," John 13.

This discipline never acts beyond what is manifested; and, therefore, we see the disciples questioning one another what these things meant, before the evil was done; it did not touch the conscience of the assembly. The Father's discipline comes in, where there is nothing manifest, for that which is secret, or which may come out years after. If an elder brother, and seeing a younger one in danger, I ought to deal in this fatherly care, and tell him of it; but this is very distinct from church discipline. The moment I exercise fatherly discipline, it assumes a communion, in myself, with God, about the thing—a discernment of that working in another which may produce evil, that he has not—a perception which I have by my spiritual experience, which authorises and incites me to act in faithful love toward him, though without, perhaps, any ability to explain what I am doing to a human being.

The mixing up of these three things, individual remonstrance, the Father's discipline in this fatherly care, and Christ's discipline "as Son over his own house"—ecclesiastical discipline, has led to all manner of most dreadful confusion.

The great body of discipline ought to be altogether aimed at hindering excommunication, the putting of a person out. Nine-tenths of the discipline which ought to go on is individual. If it comes to the question of the exercise of the discipline of "the Son over his own house," the church ought never to take it up, but in self-identification, in confession of common sin and shame, that it has come over to this. So it would be no court of justice at all, but a disgrace to the body. Spirituality in the church would purge out hypocrisy, defilement, and everything unworthy, without assuming a judicial aspect. Nothing should be so abhorrent, as that, in God's house, such a thing had happened. If it were in one of our houses that something dishonourable and disgraceful had happened, should we go and feel as though we were altogether unconcerned, that we had nothing to do with it? It might be that some reprobate son must be put out, for the sake of the others—he cannot be reclaimed, and he is corrupting the family—what can be done? It is necessary to say, "I cannot keep you here; I cannot corrupt the rest by your habits and manners." Would it not, nevertheless, be for weeping and mourning, for sorrow of heart, and shame and dishonour to the whole family? They would not like to talk on the subject; and others would refrain from it to spare their feelings: his name would not be mentioned. In the house of the Son, how abhorrent to be putting out! what common shame! what anguish! what sorrow! There is nothing more abhorrent to God than a judicial process.

The church is indeed plunged in corruption and weakness; but this is the very thing that would make one cling to the saints, and the more anxiously maintain the individual responsibility of those who have any gift for

pastoral care. There is nothing I pray for more, than the dispensation of pastors. What I mean by a pastor is a person who can bear the whole sorrow, care, misery, and sin of another on his own soul, and go to God about it, and bring from God what will meet it, before he goes to the other.

There is another thing most clear. The result may be putting out; but if it ever comes to a corporate act in judgment, discipline ends the moment he is put out, and ends altogether— "Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth," 1 Cor. 5:12.

The question whether I can sit down with this or that person who is within never arises. A person staying away from communion (because of another, of whom he does not think well, being there) is a most extraordinary thing; he is excommunicating himself for another's sake. "For we, being many, are one bread [loaf], and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread," 1 Cor. 10:17. If I stay away, I am saying, that I am not a Christian, because another has gone wrong. That is not the way to act. There may be a step to take, but it is not to commit the folly of excommunicating myself, lest a sinner should intrude.

All discipline until the last act is restorative. The act of putting outside, of excommunication, is not (properly speaking) discipline, but the saying that discipline is ineffective, and there is an end of it; the church says, "I can do no more."

As to the question of unanimity in cases of church discipline, we must remember, it is the Son exercising His discipline over His own house. In the case in

Corinthians it was the direct action of Paul in apostolic power on the body, and not of the church. The body claiming a right to exercise discipline! one cannot conceive a more terrible thing; it is turning the family of God into a court of justice. Suppose the case of a father going to turn out-of-doors a wicked son, and the other children of the family saying, “We have a right to help our father in turning our brother out of the house,” what an awful thing! We find the apostle forcing the Corinthians to exercise discipline, when they were not a bit disposed to do so. “Here (he says) there is sin among you, and ye are not mourning, that he that has done this deed might be taken away from among you (he is forcing them to the conviction that the sin is theirs, as well as that of the man); and now put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” The church is never in the place of exercising discipline until the sin of the individual becomes the sin of the church, recognised as such.

There is all this, “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (1 Tim. 5:20), “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such,” etc., and the like; but, if evil has arisen of such a character as to demand excommunication, instead of the church having a right to put away, it is obliged to do it. The saints must approve themselves clear. He forces these people into the recognition of their own condition, gets them ashamed of themselves— they retire from the man—and he is left alone to the shame of his sin. (See 2 Cor. 2 and 7.) That is the way the apostle forced them to exercise discipline. The conscience of the whole church was forced into cleanness in a matter of which it was corporately guilty. And what trouble he had to do it!

That is, I think, the force of, “To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the Person of Christ; lest Satan should get an advantage over us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” What the devil was at was this—the apostle had insisted upon the excommunication (1 Cor. 5:3-5); and the church did not like it. He compelled them to act; they did it in the judicial way, and did not want to restore him, 2 Cor. 2:6, 7. Then he makes them go along with him in the act of restoration: “to whom ye forgive,” etc. The design of Satan was to introduce the wickedness, and make them careless about it, and, afterwards, judicial; and then to make it an occasion of separation of feeling between the apostle and the body of saints at Corinth. Paul identifies himself with the whole body, first forcing them to clear themselves, and then taking care that they should all restore him, that there should be perfect unity between himself and them. He goes with them, and associates them with himself, in it all; and so, in both excommunication and restoration, he has them with him. If the conscience of the body is not brought up to what it acts, to the point of purging itself by the act of excommunication, I do not see what good is done: it is merely making hypocrites of them.

The house is to be kept clean. The Father’s care over the family is one thing; the Son’s over “his own house,” another. The Son commits the disciples to the care of the Holy Father (John 17), this is distinct from having the house in order. In John 15 he says, “I am the true vine,” “ye are the branches,” “my Father is the husbandman,” etc., it is all the Father’s care. The Father purges the branches, to the end they may bear as much fruit as

possible. But in the case of the Son over His own house, it is not individual, but the house kept clean. “If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged,” etc. There are then these three kinds of discipline:— (1) That of brotherly relationship. Here I go as a person wronged, but it must be with grace.

(2) That of fatherly care—the Father exercising it with loving-kindness and tenderness, as over an erring child.

(3) Where the Son is over His own house, and where we have to act in the responsibility of keeping the house clean, that people should have their consciences according to the house in which they are—not only the individual, but the house, the body: the conscience of the body must act. The effect may be, graciously, that the individual is restored, but that is a collateral thing. When you come to that point, there is something besides restoring; there is the responsibility of keeping the house clean—the conscience of all there; and that may sometimes give a great deal of trouble.

As to the nature of all this, the spirit in which it should be conducted, it is priestly; and the priests ate the sin-offering within the holy place, Lev. 10. I do not think any person or body of Christians can exercise discipline, unless as having the conscience clear, as having felt the power of the evil and sin before God, as if he had himself committed it. Then he does it as needful to purge himself. It will all be for positive mischief—the dealing with it, if not so. What character of position does Jesus hold now? That of priestly service. And we are associated with Him. If there were more of the priestly intercession implied by eating of the sin-offering within the holy place, there would be no such abomination as

that of the church assuming a judicial character. Suppose the case of a family, in which a brother had committed something disgraceful, would it not be for bitterness and anguish of the whole family? What common anxiety and pain of heart it would occasion! Does Christ not feed upon the sin-offering? does He not feel the sorrow? does He not charge Himself with it? He is the Head of His body, the church: is He not wounded and pained in a member? Yes, it is so. If it be a case of individual remonstrance with a brother for a fault, I am not fit to rebuke him, unless my soul has been in priestly exercise and service about it, as though I had been in the sin myself. How does Christ act? He bears it on His heart and pleads about it to draw out the grace that will remedy it. So with the child of God: he carries the sin upon his own heart into the presence of God; he pleads with the Father, as a priest, that the dishonour done to Christ's body, of which he is a member, may be remedied. This I believe to be the spirit in which discipline should be exercised. But here we fail. We have not grace to eat the sin-offering. I come to church action and there I find yet more: it should go and humble itself until it has cleared itself. This is the force to me of "ye have not mourned," etc.; there was not sufficient spirituality at Corinth to take and bear the sin at all; "You ought to have been bowed down there, broken-hearted, and broken in spirit at such a thing not being put out—concerned as to the cleanness of Christ's house."

It is another part of priestly service to separate between clean and unclean. The priests were not to drink wine nor strong drink, that they might keep themselves in a spiritual state, by the habits of the sanctuary, being able

to discern between clean, etc. This is always true. We must take as our object, in dealing with evil, God's object. God's house is the scene and place of God's order. If it be said, that the woman must "have power [a covering] on her head because of the angels" (1 Cor. n: 10), it is as the exhibition of God's order. Nothing should be permitted in the house that angels could not come in and approve. All is in thorough ruin; the full glory of the house will be manifested when Christ comes in glory, and not till then; but we should desire that, as far as possible, by the energy of the Holy Ghost, there should be correspondence in spirit and manner with what shall be hereafter. When Israel returned from the captivity, after Lo-ammi had been written upon them, and the glory had departed from the house, the public manifestation was gone, but Nehemiah and Ezra could find that in which to act according to God's mind. That is our present condition. But we have now what they had not: we were always a remnant, we began at the end— "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," Matt. 18:20. If the whole corporate system has come to nought, I get back to certain unchangeable blessed principles from which all is derived. The very thing from which all springs, to which Christ has attached, not only His name, but His discipline— the power of binding and loosing—is the gathering together of the "two or three." This is of the greatest possible comfort. The great principle remains true amidst all the failure.

If we turn to John 20 we find that when He sent forth His disciples, He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain,

they are retained." There is nothing like a corporate church system here; but the energy of the Holy Ghost in spiritual discernment in the disciples, as sent from Christ, and acting on behalf of Christ. Discipline is a question of the energy of the Spirit. If that which is done is not done in the power of the Holy Ghost, it is nothing.

In principle, what was needed has been said. I do not see any difference, whether it be in the hands of a remnant, or anything else; because then we get into the structure of a judicial process at once—sinners judging sinners. It is, first of all, a question what the energy of the Spirit is for ministry in God's house. The unanimity is a unanimity of having consciences exercised and forced into discipline. It is a terrible thing to hear sinners talking about judging another sinner; but a blessed thing to see them exercised in conscience about sin come in among themselves. It must be in grace. I no more dare act, save in grace, than I could wish judgment to myself. "Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again," Matt. 7:1, 2. If we go to exercise judgment, we shall get it.

As to the difficulty of saints meeting together, where there is not pastorship, my prayer is, that God would raise up pastors; but I believe where there were brethren meeting together, and walking together on brotherly principles, provided they kept to their real position, and did not set about making churches, they would be just as happy as others in different circumstances. One thing I would pray for, because I love the Lord's sheep, is that there might be shepherds. I know nothing next to personal communion with the Lord, so blessed as the pastor feeding the Lord's sheep,

the Lord’s flock; but it is the Lord’s flock. I see nothing about a pastor and his flock; that changes the whole aspect of things. When it is felt to be the Lord’s flock a man has to look over, what thoughts of responsibility, what care, what zeal, what watchfulness! I do not see anything so lovely. “Lovest thou me? … Feed my sheep—feed my lambs.” I know nothing like it upon earth— the care of a true-hearted pastor, one who can bear the whole burden of grief and care of any soul and deal with God about it. I believe it is the happiest, most blessed relationship that can subsist in this world. But we are not to suppose that the “great Shepherd “cannot take care of His own sheep because there are no under-shepherds. If there were those who met together and hung on the Lord, if they did not pretend to be what they were not, though there were no pastors among them, there would be no danger; they would infallibly have the care of that Shepherd. We must not impute our failure to God, as though He could not take care of us. The moment power in the Spirit is gone, power in the flesh comes in.

103 All acting against God’s commandments and doing that which was not to be done, was sin, and called for the sin-offering; but there were trespasses against the individual, wrongs done to the neighbour, by breaches of confidence and the like, and for these there was a trespass-offering. See the first seven verses of Leviticus 6.

## Separation From Evil God’s Principle Of Unity

The need of union is felt now by every right-minded Christian. The power of evil is felt by all. Its pressure comes too near home, its rapid and gigantic strides are too evident and affect too nearly the particular feelings which characterise distinctively every class of Christians, to allow them to be blind to it, however little they may appreciate its true bearing and character. Better and holier feelings, too, arouse them to the sense of common danger, and (as far as it is entrusted to man’s responsibility) the danger in which the cause of God is, from those who never did, and never would spare it. This need is felt wherever the Spirit of God acts, so as to make the saints value grace and truth and one body.

The feelings which the sense of the progress of evil produces may be different. Some, though they are but few, may yet trust to the bulwarks they have long looked at, but which had their force only in a respect for them which exists no longer. Others may trust to a fancied force of truth, which it has never exerted but in a little flock, because God and the work of His Spirit were there; others, to a union which never yet was the instrument of power on the side of good—that is, a union by concord and agreement. While others may feel bound to abstain from such an agreed union, by reason of previously subsisting obligations, or prepossessions, so that the union tends to form only a party. But the sense of danger is universal. That which was long mocked at as a theory is now too practically felt to be denied; though the apprehensions of the word, which made

those who were subjected to that mockery foresee the evil, may be rejected and slighted still.

But this state of things produces difficulties and dangers of a peculiar kind to the saints, and leads to the inquiry, where the path of the saint is, and where true union is to be found. There is danger, from the very blessedness and desirableness of union, of those who have long truly felt its value, and the obligation that lies on the saints to maintain it, being led to follow the impulses of such as refused to see it when it was spoken of from the word, and to abandon the very principles and path which their own clearer apprehension of the word of God led them to embrace from it, as foreseeing the coming storm. They learnt from that precious word that it was coming; and, while calmly studying it in the word, saw the path marked out there for the believer as such, and indeed, in every time. It is now pressed upon them to desert it for that suggested to men's minds by the pressure of the anxieties they anticipated, but which, though there may be an impulse of good in it, the word of God itself did not furnish when inquired into in peace. But is this the path of the saints?—to turn from that which generally rejected intelligence of the word afforded them, to pursue the light of those who would not see? This, however, is not the only danger; nor is it my object to dwell on the dangers but the remedy. There is a constant tendency in the mind to fall into sectarianism, and to make a basis of union of the opposite of what I have here just alluded to: that is, of a system of some kind or other to which the mind is attached, and round which saints or others are gathered; and which, assuming itself to be based on a true principle of unity, regards as schism whatever separates from itself—attaching the

name of unity to what is not God's centre and plan of unity. Wherever this is the case, it will be found that the doctrine of unity becomes a sanction for some kind of moral evil, for something contrary to the word of God; and the authority of God Himself, which is attached to the idea of unity, becomes, through the instrumentality of this latter thought, a means of engaging the saints to continue in evil. Moreover, continuance in this evil is enforced by all the difficulty which unbelief finds to separate from that in which it is settled, and where the natural heart finds its ties, and, generally, temporal interests the sphere of their support.

Now, unity is a divine doctrine and principle; but, as evil is possible wherever unity is taken by itself so as to be a conclusive authority, wherever evil does enter, the conclusive obligation of unity binds to the evil, because the unity, where the evil is, is not to be broken. Of this we have a flagrant example in Romanism. There the unity of the church is the grand basis of argument; and it has been the ground of keeping the world, we may say, in every sanctioned enormity, and made the name of Christianity its warrant—an authority to bind souls to evil, till the name itself became shameful to the natural conscience of man. The plea of unity may then be, in a measure, the latitudinarianism which flows from the absence of principle; it may be the narrowness of a sect formed on an idea; or, it may be, as taken by itself, the claim to be the church of God, and hence in principle secure as much indifference to evil, as it is the convenience of the body or its rulers to allow, or is in the power of Satan to drag them into. If the name of unity then be so powerful in itself, and in virtue of blessings withal which God Himself has attached to it, it behoves

us well to understand what the unity He owns really is. This it is I would propose to inquire into; acknowledging the desire for it to be a good thing, and many of the attempts at it to contain in them elements of good feeling, even when the means may not carry conviction to the judgment as being those of God.

Now, it will be at once admitted, that God Himself must be the spring and centre of unity, and that He alone can be in power or title. Any centre of unity outside God must be so far a denial of His Godhead and glory, an independent centre of influence and power; and God is one—the just, true, and only centre of all true unity. Whatever is not dependent on this is rebellion. But this so simple, and, to the Christian, necessary truth, clears our way at once. Man's fall is the reverse of this. He was a subordinate creature, an image too of Him that was to come; he would become an independent one, and he is, in sin and rebellion, the slave of a mightier rebel than himself, whether in the dispersion of several self-will, or its concentration in the dominion of the man of the earth. But then we must, in consequence of this, go a step farther. God must be a centre in blessing as well as power, when He surrounds Himself with united and morally intelligent hosts. We may know that He will punish rebellion with everlasting destruction from His presence into the hopelessness of uncentred and selfish individual misery and hatred; but He Himself must be a centre of blessing and holiness, for He is a holy God, and He is love. Indeed, holiness in us (while it is by its nature separation from evil) is just having God, the Holy One, who is love too, the object, centre, and spring of our affections. He makes us partakers of His holiness (for He is essentially separate from all evil, which He

knows as God, though as His contrary); but in us, holiness must consist in our affections, thoughts, and conduct being centred in, and derived from Him: a place maintained in entire dependence upon Him. Of the establishment and power of this unity in the Son and Spirit I will speak presently. It is the great and glorious truth itself on which I now insist.

This great principle is true even in creation. It was formed in unity, and God its only possible centre. It shall be brought into it yet again, and centred in Christ as its Head, even in the Son, by whom, and for whom, all things were created, Col. 1:16. It is man's glory (though his ruin as fallen) to be made thus a centre in his place—the image of Him that is to come;104 but alas! his imitator in a state of rebellion in this same place, when fallen. I know not (I would venture to say no more) that angels were ever made the centre of any system; but man was. It was his glory to be the lord and centre of this lower world (an associate but dependent Eve his companion and help in his presence). He was the image and glory of God. His dependence made him look up; and this is true glory and blessedness to all but God. Dependence looks up, and is exalted above itself. Independence must look down (for it cannot in a creature be filled with itself) and is degraded. Dependence is true exaltation in a creature when the object of it is right. The primeval state of man was not holiness, in the proper sense of it, because evil was not known. It was not a divine (but it was a blessed creation) state; it was innocence. But this was lost in the assertion of independence. If man became as God, knowing good and evil, it was with a guilty conscience, the slave of the evil he knew, and in an independence he could not

sustain himself in, while he had morally lost God to depend on.

With this state (for we must now descend to the present actual question of unity), with man in this state, God has to deal, if true real unity, such as He can own, is to be attained. Now, He must be still the centre. It is not therefore in mere creative power. Evil exists. The world is lying in wickedness, and the God of unity is the Holy God. Separation therefore, separation from evil, becomes the necessary and sole basis and principle, I do not say the power, of unity. For God must be the centre and power of that unity, and evil exists: and from that corruption they must be separate who are to be in God's unity; for He can have no union with evil. Hence, I repeat, we have this great fundamental principle, that separation from evil is the basis of all true unity. Without this, it is more or less attaching God's authority to evil, and rebellion against His authority; as is all unity independent of Him. It is a sect in its lightest and feeblest forms; in its fullest, it is the great apostasy, of which one of the characteristics, as ecclesiastical or secular power, is unity; but unity by subjection of man to what is independent really or openly of God because it is of His word; not established by subjection to the Holy One, according to His word,105 and by the power of the Spirit working in those that are united, and by His presence, which is the personal power of union in the body. But this separation is not yet by judicial power, which separates (not the good from the evil, the precious from the vile, but) the vile from the precious, banishing it from His presence in judgment; binding up the tares in bundles, and casting them into the furnace of fire; gathering out of His kingdom all things that

offend (Satan and his angels being himself cast down and all things thereupon being gathered together in one in Christ, in heaven and in earth). Then the world, not the conscience, will be cleared from evil by the judgment which will not allow it, but early cut off all the wicked (not by the power and testimony of the Spirit of God).

It is not now the time of this judicial separation of the evil from the good in the world, as the field of Christ, by the cutting off and destruction of the wicked. But unity is not therefore given up out of the thoughts of God; nor can He have recognised union with evil. There is one Spirit and one body. He gathers together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.

And now, as to the principle in general: God is working in the midst of evil to produce a unity of which He is the centre and the spring, and which owns dependently His authority. He does not do it yet by the judicial clearing away of the wicked; He cannot unite with the wicked or have a union which serves them. How can it be then this union? He separates the called from the evil. “Come out from among them and be ye separate, and I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. As it is written, I will walk in them and dwell in them,” etc. Now here we have it distinctly set forth. This was God’s way of gathering. It was by saying, Come out from among them. He could not have gathered true unity around Him otherwise. Since evil exists—yea, is our natural condition—there cannot be union of which the Holy God is the centre and power but by separation from it. Separation is the first element of unity and union.

We may now inquire a little further into the manner in which this unity is effectuated, on what it is based. There must be an intrinsic power of union holding it together to a centre, as well as a power separating from evil to form it; and this centre found it denies all others. The centre of unity must be a sole and unrivalled centre. The Christian has not long to inquire here. It is Christ—the object of the divine counsel—the manifestation of God Himself—the one only vessel of mediatorial power, entitled to unite creation as He by whom and for whom all things were made; and the church as its Redeemer, its head, its glory, and its life. And there is this double headship: He is the head over all things to the church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. This will be accomplished in its day.

For the present we take up the intermediate period, the unity of the church itself, and its unity in the midst of evil. Now there can be no moral power which can unite, away from evil, but Christ. He alone, as perfect grace and truth, detects all the evil which separates from God, and from which God separates. He alone can, of God, be the attractive centre which draws together to Himself all on whom God so acts. God will own no other. There is no other to whom the testimony could be borne, who is of God and towards God. Redemption itself, too, makes this necessary and evident: there can be but one Redeemer, one to whom a ransomed heart can be given, as well as where a divinely quickened heart can give all its affections, the centre and revelation of the Father’s love. He, too, is the centre of power to do it. In Him all the fulness dwells. Love (and God is love) is known in Him. He is the wisdom of God and the power of God. And, yet more than this, He is the separating power of attraction,

because He is the manifestation of all this, and the fulfiller of it in the midst of evil; and this is what we poor, miserable ones want who are in it; and it is what, if we may so speak, God wants for His separating glory in the midst of evil. Christ sacrificed Himself to set up God in separating love in the midst of evil. There was more than this—a wider scope in this work; but I speak in reference to my present subject now.

Thus Christ becomes, not only the centre of unity to the universe in His glorious title of power, but (as the manifester of God, the one owned and set up of the Father and attracter of man) He becomes a peculiar and special centre of divine affections in man, round which they are gathered as the sole divine centre of unity. For indeed, as the centre, necessarily the sole centre, “he that gathereth not with me scattereth.” And such, as to this point, was the object even, and power of His death: “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.” And more specially, He gave Himself “not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad.” But here again, we find this separation of a peculiar people, “He gave himself for us that he might… purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” He was the very pattern of the divine life in man, separate from the evil, by which it was universally surrounded; He was the friend of publicans and sinners, piping in grace to men by familiar and tender love; but He was ever the separate man. And so He is as the centre of the church and high-priest. “Such a high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” —and, it is added, “made higher than the heavens.” Here in passing we may remark, that the centre and subject of

this unity then is heavenly. A living Christ still became the instrument of maintaining the enmity, being Himself subject to the law of commandments contained in ordinances. Hence, though the divine glory of His Person necessarily reached over this wall as a fruitful bough of grace to poor passing Gentiles without (and it could not be otherwise, for where faith was, He could not deny Himself to be God, nor what God was, even love); yet in His regular course, as a man made of a woman, He was made under the law. But by His death He broke down the middle wall of partition, and made both one, and reconciled both in one body unto God, making peace. Hence it is as lifted up, and finally as made higher than the heavens, that He becomes the centre and sole object of unity.

Let us remark in passing, that hence worldliness always destroys unity. The flesh cannot rise up to heaven, nor descend in love to every need. It walks in the separative comparison of self-importance. “I am of Paul,” etc. “Are ye not carnal and walk as men?” Paul had not been crucified for them, nor had they been baptised in the name of Paul. They had got down to earth in their minds, and unity was gone. But the glorious heavenly Christ in one word embraced all. “Why persecutest thou me?” This separation from all else was more slow among the Jews, as having been outwardly themselves the separated people of God; but having fully shewn what they were, the word to the disciples was, “Let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” The Lord (when as the great result He would have one flock and one Shepherd) put forth His own sheep and went before them. Indeed we have only to shew that unity is God’s mind, and separation from evil is the

necessary consequence; for it exists as a principle in the calling of God before unity itself. Unity is His purpose, and, as He is the only rightful centre, it must be the result of holy power; but separation from evil is His very nature. Hence, when He publicly calls Abraham, the words: “Get thee out of thy country, and out of thy kindred, and from thy father’s house.”

But, to continue; from what we have seen, it is evident that the Lord Jesus Christ on high is the object round which the church clusters in unity. He is its Head and Centre. This is the character of their unity, and of their separation from evil, from sinners. Yet they were not to be taken out of the world, but kept from the evil, and sanctified through the truth; Jesus having set Himself thus apart to this end. Hence, as well as for the public display of the power and glory of the Son of man, the Holy Ghost was sent down to identify the called ones with their heavenly Head, and to separate them from the world in which they were to remain: and the Holy Spirit became thus the centre and power down here of the unity of the church in Christ’s name—Christ having broken down the middle wall of partition, reconciling both in one body by the cross. The saints, thus gathered in one, became the habitation of God through the Spirit. The Holy Ghost Himself became the power and centre of unity, but in the name of Jesus, of a people separated alike from Jew and Gentile, and delivered out of this present evil world into union with their glorious Head. By Peter, God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And of the Jews there was a remnant according to the election of grace; as Paul, one of them, was separated himself from Israel, and from the Gentiles, to whom he was sent.

And so was the constant testimony. He that saith he hath fellowship with Him and walketh in darkness, lieth and doeth not the truth. Separation from evil is the necessary first principle of communion with Him. Whoever calls it in question is a liar—he is, so far, of the wicked one. He belies the character of God. If unity depends on God, it must be separation from darkness. So with one another. If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another. And mark, here there is no limit. It is as God is in the light. There the blessed Lord has placed us by His precious redemption; and hence, by that, the whole manner of our walk and union must be formed: we can have no union (as of God) out of it; the Jew could, because his—though separation, and hence the same in principle—yet was only outward in the flesh, and the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest (no, not even for the saints, though in God's counsels doubtless they were to be there through the sacrifice about to be offered).

So, again, one with the other. What fellowship hath light with darkness? Christ with Belial? What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? And then, addressing the saints, the Holy Ghost adds, "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate." Otherwise we provoke the Lord to jealousy, as if we were stronger than He. Of this unity and fellowship, I may add, the Lord's supper is the symbol and expression. For we, being many, are all one bread (loaf), for we are all partakers of that one bread.

We find then most distinctly, that, as the unity of Israel of old was founded on deliverance and calling from the midst of, and maintained separation amongst, the heathen which surrounded them, so the church's unity was based on the power of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, separating a peculiar people out of the world to Christ, and dwelling amongst them; God Himself thus dwelling and walking in them. For there is one Spirit, and one body, as we are called in one hope of our calling. Indeed, the very name of Holy Spirit implies it; for holiness is separation from evil. Whatever failure, moreover, there may be in attainment, the principle and measure of this separation is necessarily the light, as God is in the light; the way into the holiest being made manifest, and the Holy Ghost comes down thence to dwell in the church below, and so in power of heavenly separation, because the indwelling centre and power of unity (just as the Shekinah in Israel), He establishes the holiness of the church and its unity in its separation to God, according to His own nature, and the power of that presence. Such is the church, and such is true unity. Nor can the saint recognise, intelligently, any other, though he may own desires and efforts after good in that which is short of it.

Here I might close my remarks, having developed the great, though simple, principle, flowing from the very nature of God, that separation from evil is His principle of unity. But a difficulty collateral to my main object and subject presents itself. Supposing evil introduces itself into this one body so formed actually on earth, does the principle still hold good? How then can separation from evil maintain unity? And here we can touch on the mystery of iniquity. But this principle, flowing from the

very nature of God, that He is holy, cannot be set aside. Separation from evil is the necessary consequence of the presence of the Spirit of God under all circumstances as to conduct and fellowship. But here there is a certain modification of it. The revealed presence of God is always judicial when it exists; because power against evil is connected with the holiness which rejects it. Thus in Israel God's presence was judicial; His government was there, which did not allow of evil. So, though in another manner, it is in the church. God's presence is judicial there—not in the world, save in testimony, because God is not yet revealed in the world; and hence it plucks up no tares out of that field. But it judges them that are within.

Hence the church is to put out from itself the wicked person, and thus maintains its separation from evil. And unity is maintained in the power of the Holy Ghost and a good conscience. And indeed, that the Spirit may not be grieved, and the practical blessing lost, saints are exhorted to look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God. And how sweet and blessed is this garden of the Lord, when it is thus maintained and blooms in the fragrance of Christ's grace. But, alas! we know worldliness creeps in, and spiritual power declines; the taste for this blessing is enfeebled, because it is not enjoyed in the power of the Spirit; the spiritual fellowship with Christ the heavenly Head decays, and the power which banishes evil out of the church is no longer in living exercise. The body is not sufficiently animated by the Holy Ghost to answer the mind of God. But God will never leave Himself without witness. He brings home the evil to the body by some testimony or other—by the word or by judgments, or both in

succession—to recall it to its spiritual energy, and lead it to maintain His glory and its place. If it refuse to answer to the very nature and character of God, and to the incompatibility of that nature with evil (so that it becomes really a false witness for God), then the first and immutable principle recurs, the evil must be separated from.

Further, the unity which is maintained after such separation, becomes a testimony to the compatability of the Holy Ghost and evil: that is, it is in its nature apostasy; it maintains the name and authority of God in His church, and associates it with evil. It is not the professed open apostasy of avowed infidelity; but it is denying God according to the true power of the Holy Ghost, while using His name. This unity is the great power of evil pointed out in the New Testament, connected with the professing church and the form of piety. From such we are to turn away. This power of evil in the church may be discerned spiritually, and left when there is the consciousness of inability to effect any remedy; or if there be an open public testimony, it is then open condemnation to it. Thus, previous to the Reformation, God gave light to many who maintained a witness to this very evil in the professing church, apart from it; some bore testimony and still remained. When the Reformation came it was openly and publicly given, and the professing body or Romanism became openly and avowedly apostate, as far as a professing Christian body can, in the Council of Trent. But wherever the body declines the putting away of evil, it becomes in its unity a denier of God’s character of holiness, and then separation from the evil is the path of the saint; and the unity he has left is the very greatest evil that can exist

where the name of Christ is named. Saints may remain, as they have in Romanism, where there is not power to gather all saints together; but the duty of the saint as to it is plain on the first principles of Christianity, though doubtless his faith may be exercised by it. “Let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” It is possible that he that departs from evil may make himself a prey; but this, of course, makes no difference; it is a question of faith. He is in the true power of God’s unity. Thus, then, the word of God affords us the true nature, object, and power of unity; and, in so doing, it gives us the measure of it, by which we judge of what pretends to it, and the manner of it; and, moreover, the means of maintaining its fundamental principles according to the nature and power of God by the Holy Ghost in the conscience where it may not be realised together in power. Its nature flows from God’s; for of true unity He must be the centre, and He is holy; and He brings us into it by separating us from evil. Its object is Christ; He is the sole centre of the church’s unity, objectively as its Head. Its power is the presence of the Holy Ghost down here, sent as the Spirit of Truth withal from the Father by Jesus. Its measure is walking in the light, as God is in the light; fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus, and, we may add, through the testimony of the written word—the apostolic and prophetic word of the New Testament especially. It is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (of the New Testament), Jesus Christ Himself being the corner stone. The means of maintaining it is putting away evil (judicially if needed), so as to maintain, through the Spirit, fellowship with the Father and the Son. If evil be not put away, then separation from that which does not becomes a matter of conscience. I

return, if alone, into the essential and infallible unity of the body, in its everlasting principles of union with the Head in a holy nature by the Spirit. The path of the saints thus becomes clear. God will secure by eternal power the vindication, not here perhaps, but before His angels, of them who have rightly owned His nature and truth in Christ Jesus.

I believe these fundamental principles are deeply needed in this day, for the saint who seeks to walk truly and thoroughly with God. Latitudinarian unity it may be painful and trying to keep aloof from; it has an amiable form in general, is in a measure respectable in the religious world, tries nobody's conscience, and allows of everybody's will. It is the more difficult to be decided about, because it is often connected with a true desire of good, and is associated with amiable nature. And it seems rigid, and narrow, and sectarianism to decline so to walk. But the saint, when he has the light of God, must walk clearly in that. God will vindicate His ways in due time. Love to every saint is a clear duty; walking in their ways is not. And he that gathers not with Christ scatters. There can be but one unity; confederacy, even for good, is not it, even if it have its form. Unity, professed to be of the church of God, while evil exists, and is not put away, is a yet more serious matter. It will always be found to be connected with the clerical principle, because that is needed to maintain unity, when the Spirit is not its power, and, in fact, takes its place, guides, rules, governs in its place, under the plea of priesthood, or ministry, owned as a distinct body, a separate institution: it would not hold together without this.

104 See Ephesians 1. He hath made known to us the mystery of His will; that is, gathering together in one all things in Christ, in whom we have received an inheritance.

105 This is characteristic of the independent unity. I believe that it will be in an openly infidel state, and a manifestation of the power of Satan. But supposing it is not openly such, it is clear that subjection to God is shewn in subjection to His word. Now, the authority of the church is confessedly the antecedent to the authority of the word in Romanism, and the saints are not all of them allowed to be the immediate objects of God's own word, nor act upon it (that is, be subject to it). They are to be subject to the church: let the church allow it or not, that makes no difference. He who allows can hinder (that is, hinder God's addressing the saints). For this is the true question of Protestantism, not man's title to the Bible merely, but God's title to address man directly by His word; more particularly to address each of His own servants, or those professedly such.