The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, Volume 4 (Ecclesiastical 2)

John Nelson Darby

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A Glance At Various Ecclesiastical Principles

and Examination of the Foundations on which the Institutions of the Church on Earth are sought to be based. In Reply to Various Writings.

Introduction

Whoever prays much for the Church will feel little disposition to let his desires evaporate pen in hand. Nevertheless, these prayers will give to him who perseveres in them a spiritual impulse, by virtue of which (far from letting himself be hindered by things which might have the appearance of meeting the need of souls, but which in reality would serve only to seduce and lead them aside) he will be constrained to manifest, as far as in him lies, the true character of that which, while clothing itself with this specious garb, might draw souls far away from the truth and from the Lord’s blessing.

The controversy on the subject of the views put forth for some years past, as to the Church and the presence in it of the Holy Ghost, has assumed an entirely new phase. We no longer hear people say much of Korah, or hold similar language —language which a spiritual activity, that does not enter into the framework of that which exists, has always to endure. It is now agreed that it is a question of serious principles. Events, and the imperious wants of the children of God, have brought all who reflect, no matter how little, to recognize as solemn and, so to speak, prophetic warnings—warnings which God has verified by the sequel—what had at first been taken

for enmity against that which exists, and for a desire to upset an order and an authority which people loved to consider the assured channels of blessing.

Far more than this, the principles put forth as to ministry are recognized as being of all importance and essential to the existence as well as to the well-being of the Church. I do not mean that, on that account, those who have put them forth are the more loved; nor, by the fact of persons being obliged at last to recognize it, is a disagreeable truth the more loved for that. We find moreover, that when such truth cannot be denied, it is suddenly discovered that all the world knew it already, and that the one who has insisted on it has done nothing but exaggerate and thus spoil it. It little matters, if, by the goodness of God, the truth makes its way. The grace of Him who has given it to us will do the rest; and if this does not fall to the lot of those who have blamed the testimony rendered to this truth, I hope it will at least do so on behalf of him who has borne the burden of it.

I desire to take matters up at the point at which they are actually found, and that as briefly as possible.

First Part Present State of Opinion on the Subject of Ministry.

The universal priesthood of the children of God, a truth so precious—what do I say?—a relationship with their God and Father essential to their happiness and to that of the Church itself—this priesthood is now admitted without contestation; but, in exchange, it is sought to carry on the combat with more success on another ground. We will follow our adversaries to the. field which they have themselves chosen, namely, the question of ministry: that of the sufficiency of the word

and the Spirit to lead Christians in every respect; finally, that of a formal organization, the great idol of the day, what is called a Free Church.

What had been refused to the testimony of the word is yielded to the force of circumstances. Wherever there is a little light, the clergy are absolutely unable to maintain themselves in the position they took pleasure in keeping. Spiritual activity is too great; eyes are too much opened to abuses; the position in which the clergy themselves find themselves is too false. By the goodness of God the attention of Christians is too much awakened as to these questions. But the exterior evil is more threatening than even this movement of minds in the midst of the flocks; and the ecclesiastical functionaries feel that they must leave it an undisputed field, or that still worse would come to them. They feel, besides, that what constituted their support is becoming a clog to them, and that they are obliged to leave in freer hands the work which they would like to direct, and which nevertheless they dare not undertake.

Read what is said in “The Archives of Christendom,” vol. 14, p. 74, “This immense privilege [that of priesthood], to which the mercy of God has exalted poor sinners, imposes racred duties on all Christians, confers on them also all the spiritual rights which the Church is in possession of. I say all: government, the preaching of the word, the administration of the sacraments, the power to remit or retain sins.” “If this be objected to,” adds the author of this article, “the protestant dogma on this point is not known.”

There is certainly great confusion in this; but the establishment of such a principle is of the greatest

importance. The author, it is true, makes a restriction—a restriction which he presents not at all as flowing from divine right, but purely from human right. It is that for good order. The Church entrusts1 these rights to men whom she sets up, to a Clergy.

“Such is, in particular,” continues this same article, “the evangelistic ministry. The minister receives his gifts from God only; his office from men. It is not a character which distinguishes him from other Christians, which makes of him and his colleagues a separate order, a caste, a clergy, according to the proudly pretentious word of the catholic hierarchy, which thus calls itself alone the heritage of the Lord, while it sees in the rest of the Church only the laos [the people], the laity.”

Besides this, the article we are citing complains, because the author of the “Examination of the Darbyite Views on the Sacred Ministry” believes he finds in scripture a hierarchical government for each flock, concentrated in the person of the pastor alone, however right it may be, that he should “endeavour to utilize the religious elements he meets with among the faithful.” And he fears this monarch soon becoming a pope,” without reckoning that here again universal priesthood is found pitiably banished in the cloudy region of abstractions.”

Here is the language of “The Reformation.” “For our part, we readily acknowledge the services which Plymouthism has rendered to the gospel… Everything in Plymouthism may be reduced to two points, the idea of the action of the Holy Spirit, and the idea of the authority of the scriptures… Plymouthism wishes to substitute for human organization the action of the Holy

Spirit… We also have long thought that, on the ground of conformity to primitive usages, there can be no successful defence of present usages. We must take our stand boldly on that of evangelical liberty and of human order." That is, boldly saying that we must arrange the things of God according as we think proper.

The same journal adds, "Perhaps Plymouthism owes its existence not so much to such views on scripture and the Spirit, as to an anti-clerical tendency to which these views have served as a scaffolding, as materials, and as weapons. If this be so, we might find ourselves not so far severed as might appear. It is thus that we find ourselves entirely agreed as to the principal point of the controversy on the subject of ministry: that is to say, as to sacerdotal notions of every sort—apostolical succession, the efficacy of ordination, the conferring of an indelible character, the distinction between laity and ecclesiastics, the inherent capacity of the one or the inherent incapacity of the other to exhort, to teach, and to administer baptism or the Lord's supper. Upon all these points we pass condemnation, because nothing of all that is found in the New Testament, but especially because it is contrary to its spirit and tends to alter it gravely. It is yet needful to extirpate from our thoughts the preconceived notion of a distinction between ecclesiastics and laymen."

Let us listen to M. Henri Martin, in his pamphlet on "The resignation of the Vaudois clergy."

"The whole Church," says he, "is the clergy. There is, in the New Testament, no other high priest than Jesus Christ. Every Christian is nevertheless a priest, as sharing the priesthood of the Lord. … If all are priests

and offerers of sacrifice, there are in the Church no laity in the vulgar sense of the word, and all are the laity in the sense of being the people that God has acquired for Himself."

The "Examination of the Darbyite views,2 by a minister of Neufchatel, also acknowledges that spiritual gifts are allotted to all the faithful without exception; and the author, speaking of what he calls the Darbyite system as to ministry, agrees3 "that the greater part of the blows by which it is, in general, thought possible to vanquish this enemy, in reality do not touch it"; that instead of "rejecting ministry," it "on the contrary pretends to re-establish the only true, the only scriptural one" … that "received with charity, this adversary will certainly be changed into a friend who will contribute to awaken in the bosom of the Church the consciousness of several important truths." And the author cites this one among others: "that true Christian ministry, the ministry of spirit and of life … cannot be conferred by a mere human consecration, but must rest upon a call and a living gift of the Spirit." Moreover, he declares that he gives his "full assent to all that the system of Mr. Darby contains really true and salutary to the Church in the present day," and he recognizes "the necessity of raising ministry to, and maintaining it at, the height of these eternal truths."4 Here are testimonies drawn from pamphlets and journalistic articles written with the intention of condemning the system brought of late under the notice of Christians—testimonies which perfectly justify what I have advanced, namely: that the battle-field is entirely changed. By the avowal of our adversaries,5 the great principles which have been put forth are eternal truths. The most decided among them

agree with me on the principal point. If the Reformers recognized these eternal truths, so much the better for them and for us. I have given the preceding extracts with a view to establish that these truths are recognized. There is no longer any possibility of drawing back from this recognition.

We shall see, nevertheless, that it is quite possible to seek to render null the force of this concession, made under the constraint of facts, rather than dictated by faith.

I shall begin by rectifying some errors into which the author of the “Examination” has fallen, and to which I have alluded in the last note.

Second Part Refutation of some errors contained in the “Examination of the Darbyite views on Sacred Ministry.”

Chapter 1 On the Compatibility of Gifts and Local Charges.

The author of the “Examination” says (p. 21), “The entire doctrine of Mr. Darby on ministry rests, as we have seen, on the separation he establishes between the ministry of gifts, and charges. Charges, which appear to be characterized, according to him, by the absence of any special gift, by election through human intervention and employment for secular uses, are the diaconate and episcopate, or the office of elder.”

Next, after having quoted from the epistles various passages containing lists of gifts, the author adds (p. 24), “Mr. Darby cites especially, with confidence, four lists or enumerations of the ministries of the Spirit …

lists which do not contain the denominations of elder or deacon, and which prove thus the decided separation established by the primitive Church between ministry and charges."

"This is assuredly the decisive point. If we find, as Mr. Darby contends, in the apostolic Church, on the one hand, gifts exercised in free ministrations for the edification of the Church; on the other, charges, the result of a human election for an external administration, and this, as two series without points of contact, the case is decided in favour of Mr. Darby. If, on the contrary, we can demonstrate, that these two series are two currents proceeding originally from the same source, and which, after having separated for a moment, tended more and more, from the apostolic times, to re-approach one another and to be lost in one single stream, the future instrument of the fruitfulness of the Church; then we are on the road towards justifying the present institution, which is, in its principle, nothing else than the fusion of the divine gift and the human charge in one and the same ministry."

This, then, is the point to which the author has directed all his arguments. He affirms that I contend that gifts and charges are "two series with no points of contact." Let us see how far my writings bear this out.

I take the liberty of citing a passage from my pamphlet entitled, "On the Presence and Action of the Holy Ghost in the Church" (p. 35), where I say: "That the bishop may be engaged in feeding the flock, I do not deny. But, from the fact that such a gift is useful in the episcopal office, it does not follow that all who possessed it were in this office, and still less that the office was the same

thing as the gift. I may engage my clerk to write well and be a good accountant, and he must know these things in order to be clerk, but it does not follow that every scribe and keeper of accounts should be a clerk. This office supposes a confidence which extends to many other things, to the management of money and goods, to dealing with customers, etc. Thus, a man may be a pastor and lack many things necessary to a bishop, and never have been invested with this office. A man may lack the power of rule, discernment needed in order to watch over souls, gravity to have influence over light spirits in the details of life,6 personal acquaintance with souls, and, at the same time, be capable of feeding the flock with great success, without being clothed with the office of a bishop. This gift, namely, of pastorship, may, among other qualities, fit him for the office of a bishop; but an office which one is invested with, is not a gift given by Christ ascended up on high.

“Bishops, and not a bishop, for there were always several, were local officers, who only acted in the midst of the particular church in which they were found. A bishop was not a gift, nor a joint in the body according to the measure of the gift of Christ; but a local office, for which the possession of pastoral capacity was suitable among many other things. Pastorship is never presented as an office established by men, although bishops, who were, according to God, established by men, with a special object of watching over souls locally, may have possessed this gift and used it in their locality. These things are linked on one side, as the authority conferred on the apostles by Christ was linked with what had been given to them. For apostleship, although directly from God, was also an office, and that, we may say, from

Christ as man, acting with authority in the government of the Church; and authoritative charges flowed from thence.

“The bishop may be called to pastoral care and teaching also, as qualities of his office. I do not doubt, historically speaking, that as man has continually more and more eclipsed the action of the Spirit of God in the Church, the gift became gradually lost in the office; but that makes no change in the word, and we live in times in which we must come either to the word or to Popery,” pp. 40, 41, 42.

How the author of the “Examination,” after having read the pages I have just recalled to notice, can have been able to affirm that all my system depends on the incompatibility7 of gifts and offices, as on the incompatibility of two series without points of contact, is to me a puzzle. I even have said that, historically, gift was gradually lost in office. And when, in speaking of these two series, the author compares them to two streams which, from the times of the apostles, tended more and more to approach one another and to merge in one river, it might be said his ideas were borrowed from mine. Whether this brings him nearer the justification of the present institution, is another question. However this may be, in the very pages of my pamphlet quoted above, I treat the particular point on which the author of the “Examination” insists. And how, having carefully8 read these pages, he could present my views in such a manner, I know not. What is certain is, that the point which he views as decisive, cannot be so, since, with regard to the pastorate and episcopate, far from destroying what I have advanced, he only repeats it, attributing to me and combating as though it were my

system, precisely the opposite of what I have said, and presenting triumphantly to upset me precisely what I had myself established. Such blows can take no effect; besides, how can one answer a writing, which, while I have affirmed positively that gifts and offices are connected on one side, seeks to shew that I make of these two things “two series with no points of contact,” and presents this mistake into which he has fallen, as the foundation of my system?

Let me be permitted to make another quotation from my “Remarks on the condition of the Church”; and it will be seen to what a degree the way in which, on this “decisive point,” the author of the “Examination” presents my views, is devoid of foundation.

“As to what concerns the difference which exists between the elder and the pastor, I say that pastorship was a gift of the Holy Spirit, which the office of elder was not. This office was established by men in the Church, according to God no doubt; but it was a governmental institution, and not a gift from on high, although certain gifts and qualities were necessary to the one who was named elder. I have said that the gift of feeding the flock of God in one way or other was necessary or suitable to him, because it appears, by the Epistle to Timothy, that the elders who laboured in the word and doctrine are distinguished from other elders.”

I am sorry to be obliged to reproduce these extracts from my own writings, but the subiect, at bottom, connects itself with that which acts powerfully on the walk of Christians; and it is important it should at least be understood what is the real question.

In sum, here is what I have said, and what the author of the “Examination” has made me say.

I have said: gifts and offices are connected on one side. He has made me say that there is no point of contact between them.

I have said that in certain cases gifts were necessary to office— he makes me say that there is incompatibility between the two.

I say that gifts have been gradually lost in office—he says the same. Where then is the difference between us? Here it is. He considers it as a good thing that we are deprived of apostles and prophets; more: he affirms the Church to be in a better state than in the time of the apostles. I say, on the contrary, that the Church has lost much, that it is in a fallen state. The author of the “Examination” announces, from the outset, that he will leave aside this question. He apparently has not seen that here is the essential point. As to the points he touches on, we have seen he does not refute them; but that, however, is what he assumed to do.

Chapter 2 On the Ruin of the Church.

Among the points which the author of the “Examination” has left aside, I will mention the ruin of the Church; next, the doctrine of the return of Christ j finally, that which relates to the conflict with the Catholic hierarchy. It may be very convenient not to be occupied with it; but how form a sound judgment as to ministry and the Church in relation to it, if we put aside the question of the ruin of the Church?

I have insisted that ministry is a divine thing, an institution of God, all the energy of which comes from on

high; that man having been unfaithful, the Church, in whose midst ministry was exercised, is in ruin, and that the external order which is connected with ministry has fallen with her. It is attempted to answer me by putting aside the subject of the ruin of the Church. That is nevertheless the very root of the question.

We insist on the fact that the house has been ruined, its ordinances perverted, its order and all its arrangements forsaken or destroyed; that human ordinances, a human order, have been substituted for them; and, what merits all the attention of faith, we insist that the Lord, the Master of the house, is coming soon in His power and glory to judge all this state of things. And here we have a disciple who, when this Master is rousing the attention of His own to the real state of things, when He is directing it to the house which He had been the one to build at the beginning, and to the judgment He intends to execute on account of the unfaithfulness which has suffered His house to fall to ruin, here, I say, is a disciple who, though he is responsible, is not occupied with these things. The one who holds this language is a member of a system; he gives out this system as the house, and those who act in it as servants of the Master.

No, no, nothing of the kind! The house is in ruin, and you are bad imitators acting from your own leading, and wrongly.

How avoid the question of the ruin of the Church? How judge of the state of the Church without entering upon the question of its ruin, the question of the abandonment of the principles on which God established it, and the position in which He had placed it?

It is not possible. It is even so impossible, that while desirous of avoiding this question, the author of the "Examination," treats it in his fashion; for he constructs a system entirely opposed to the fact of the ruin of the Church. According to him, there has always been a real progress; the suppression of the apostles was a benefit, their presence hindering the development of the Church (pp. 77, 78); blossoms fell, in order that excellent fruits should be produced.9 Thus, far from seeing the Church in ruin, the author of the "Examination" finds it in a state of youth … of which faith, hope, and love form the imperishable crown."10 Far from finding in clerical ministry a human institution substituted for the ministry of the Spirit, he surpasses even Popery, in the judgment of the "Archives," in the position he gives to the Protestant clergy.

We are then led, in following the author of the "Examination," to consider the question of the ruin of the Church, not directly and in itself, but to take cognizance of the system which is set against it, and to judge, according to the scriptures, of the foundations on which it is endeavoured to base it.

Section 1

The "Examination" outdoes Popery in the Inviolability which it attributes to the clergy.

It is more convenient than safe to put aside the question of the Catholic hierarchism, when one is oneself accused of acting according to the same principles; and, even according to the "Archives of Christianity," the system of the author rests on those principles. In a very laudatory notice of the "Examination," the "Archives of Christianity,"11 after having given assent to what is said

by the author on “universal priesthood,” expresses itself in these terms: “But, as often happens, it seems to us that he (the author of the “Examination”) recalls with one hand what he has yielded with the other, and shews himself in some respects inconsistent with the great and beautiful principles he has just laid down. Thus, taking his stand on a passage of Paul (2 Tim. 2:2), of which he evidently exaggerates the bearing, he claims for the evangelical ministry, neither more nor less than the character of apostolical succession, and that, if we have rightly understood him, in a sense with which the bishops of Rome and of Canterbury ought to shew themselves equally very well satisfied. Now this principle, which, forgetting that the Spirit of God blows where it lists, traces for Him, through all the ages of the Church, one only channel (often a very impure one), in which He must ever flow; this principle, the creator of an aristocracy whose erring ways are known, a flagrant denial of the privileges of the Church of Jesus Christ, which we have just been proving; this principle, which has recently produced the fruit of Puseyism, contains in germ the whole Catholic establishment, which, for that very reason, claims for itself the exclusive title of Christian Church… It has already produced in the ideas of the author a strange, though very logical, result. I speak of a veritable divine right which he claims, not only for the spiritual gifts of the ministry, but for the office. He supposes the case in which the ministry, ‘wandering from the right way, instead of transmitting the sound apostolic doctrine, makes itself the instrument of a pernicious and poisonous doctrine, and from being a means becomes a hindrance…’ What is then to be done? ‘Then reappears in all its dignity that ministry, that imperishable priesthood of all the faithful, of which

mention is so often made in the Holy Scriptures.' And what is the right and the power of this priesthood? To withdraw from an unfaithful ministry the office which has been entrusted to it? 'No, it is to God alone that it belongs to overturn that which He alone has set up!' The priesthood of all the faithful will be able, ought, to render testimony to the truth, but, at the same time, to suffer this scourge to rest upon the whole Church, to suffer this pernicious and poisonous doctrine to flow in great waves into souls, 'and then wait for the right hand of the Lord to act in power.' ("Examination," pp. 82, 83.)

"For there would be needed, in order to renew this ministry, 'a divine act, a creative act, similar to that by which it was in the first instance founded.' Behold, then, a christian church crushed under the weight of a divine and always inviolable right, without authority to exercise any discipline upon an unfaithful ministry, although she is invested with an imperishable priesthood. But Catholicism has not gone so far; it has suspended priests, bishops, popes. Besides, have you well considered? This divine right of the office, you recognize it even in your hypothesis of an unworthy ministry! This 'instrument of a pernicious and poisonous doctrine,' it is God who has set it up! Therefore, it remains inviolable! It is exactly the principle on which an Alexander Borgia could be, by his office, as infallible a pontiff as if he had been a saint, and I am not unaware that something of this superstitious regard for a lying title has been perpetuated even in the bosom of Protestantism."

"Finally, there is another consequence of these views which we should be unwilling to admit. The author, resting on a more than doubtful interpretation of some passages of scripture, believes he finds there a

monarchical government for each flock, concentrated in the person of the pastor alone, though he ought to endeavour to utilize the religious elements which he meets with among the faithful. Monarchy, absolute monarchy! … I greatly fear it would soon be a mere pope. The poor heart of man and experience are at hand, let them be interrogated! I need no other proof, without reckoning that here again universal priesthood is found pitiably banished in 'the cloudy regions of abstractions.'"

Such is the language of an article which does its best to praise the "Examination."

Section 2

Our Duty to Judge the Principles of the "Examination."

The author of the "Examination," acknowledging as "eternal truths" the principles I have put forth; the connection between gifts and offices in apostolic times having already been clearly established in my previous writings; the "Archives" having taken care to give warning that, in his ecclesiastical principle, the author of the "Examination" went farther than Catholicism itself; the application of this principle to justify the present institution being founded on a more than doubtful interpretation of some passages of scripture; universal priesthood being again, in the judgment of the "Archives," pitiably banished in the cloudy regions of abstraction, I might think myself absolved, as far as concerns the theses of the "Examination," from the fatigues of controversy. But, as these views are used as a support in the endeavour to embarrass the path of faith, it is good that the sheep of Jesus should not be seduced; and, in order to spare them the dangers of a wrong path,

charity demands that these things should be carefully passed under judgment.

Section 3

False Ideas as to a Pretended Dismemberment of the Apostolate.

In order to shew the progress of the Church, the author of the “Examination” constructs a history of ministry of which the result is precisely, as the “Archives” remark, “to find for each flock a monarchical government, concentrated in the person of the pastor alone,” etc., and it is precisely this historical result, which is still, according to the judgment of the “Archives,” founded on “a more than doubtful interpretation of some scripture passages.” And, in fact, all this pretended history is full of inexactitudes. True as it is that there exists a point of contact between gifts and offices, and that, historically, gifts have become lost in offices, equally untrue is it to present, as does the “Examination,” this absorption of gifts by offices as a dismemberment of the apostolate effected by the apostles themselves, and as a progress of the Church.

The “Examination”12 marks out a first phase of ministry, a phase specially apostolic. On account of the external growth of the Church, “the apostles soon feel the necessity of relieving themselves of a part of their functions… of the least important, the distribution of alms. Hence the institution of deacons… This help does not seem to have long sufficed. The continual growth of the Church, above all, its propagation outside Jerusalem, and the duty… of carrying out their special mission and the proper duty of their office, oblige the apostles to abandon by degrees the pastoral position which they

had taken… in relation to the church of Jerusalem, and to take the apostolic position to which they are called in relation to the entire Church. The void thus formed (at Jerusalem) is filled up by a new office, that of elder, or bishop, the institution of which is not recounted to us… The office of elder was naturally superior to that of deacon: its later origin indicates this to us; for it is only in proportion as the apostolate retires, if I may venture so to speak, from a lower to a higher place, into the sphere of action which is proper to it, that offices successively arise."

This false principle of the dismemberment of the apostolate, a principle which serves also as the basis of the system of the "Espérance," has no foundation in the word of God. Quite the contrary; it is in contradiction with the origin and the very nature of ministry. This principle, which makes the apostles the source of ministry, in the place of Christ, Head of the body, is as abominable as can be. It is on Christ immediately that each ministry depended in its function. There was a diversity of gifts, but one Spirit; diversity of administrations, but one Lord; (1 Cor. 13:4, etc.) Christ is the "head of the body" (Eph. 4:15, 16); and it is from Him that "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 edification of itself in love." It is Christ ascended on high, who gave pastors, just as He gave apostles, grace being given to each according to the measure of the gift of Christ. "He gave some apostles, some," etc. (Eph. 4:11). "To one is given, by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge, by the same

Spirit; etc… but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every one severally as he will," 1 Cor. 12. The apostles might be the means by which the Holy Spirit was received; but the communication of the Spirit by their means was not a dismemberment of the apostolate. The apostles would have had no right to carry out such a dismemberment. They were bound to keep themselves in the position of servants, according to the talents which had been imparted to them. And this is what they did. Far from dismembering the apostolate, it is precisely because they would not abandon, for another work, that of apostleship, that, according to the will of God, they confided a work, which was being carried on without order to persons specially marked out for it.

Nothing is more unfounded than to assert that the apostles relieve themselves of a part of their functions, to form, of that part of it which they put aside, the office of deacon. Was it the apostles who, by partiality, preferred the Hebrew widows? And what confusion of ideas to say that the gift of wisdom, formed into an office, became the diaconate!13 Besides, it is entirely false to suppose that a word (as here that of wisdom), which has a general meaning, and which also designates a gift, always signifies this gift. Nothing of the kind is true.

Section 4

Observations in Detail—who Breaks the Bread—Apostolic Position—Mediatized Gifts and Free Gifts—Paul at Corinth— the Ministry of Paul overturns the System of the "Examination."

Many other assertions of the author are no less devoid of proof.

When he says,14 that Jesus “had left to His apostles no positive direction as to the constitution of the Church” he seems to attribute to Christ on earth the office of founding and organizing the Church. This is to confound entirely the work of Christ while He was on earth, and the constitution of the Church. The Church only began after the departure of Jesus, and the author himself acknowledges this truth, when he says15 that Pentecost gave birth to the Church.

He says, in speaking of the apostles:16 “It is they who go from house to house, breaking bread.” It was neither the apostles, nor any one else, in my opinion. Those who broke bread were those of whom it is said that all those who believed were together in one place, and had all things in common, sold their possessions, distributed them, and continued with one accord in the temple. The expression kat oikon signifies, not from house to house, but at home in contrast with the temple. They broke bread in private houses and not in the temple.

When he says that the apostles abandon “by degrees the pastoral position,” in order to take, relatively to the entire Church, an apostolical position, he affirms a thing of which scripture says not one word. Scripture says rather the contrary. It was agreed, as Galatians 2:9 teaches us, that Paul and Barnabas should go to the Gentiles, and that Peter, James, and John should go to the Jews. Here, then, the “Examination” rests its system on an invented fact.

When, moreover, he establishes two categories of gifts: namely, gifts arranged into office, and “in some degree

mediatized" (that is to say, gifts which, no longer depending immediately on the Lord from whom they proceed, and to be exercised under His immediate authority, are placed under the authority of an office conferred by men and exercised mediately); and "other gifts which appear to have always preserved their independence, as those of prophecy, of tongues, of contemplative knowledge, the exercise of which does not seem ever to have been put in regular order by an external consecration";17—when, we say, the "Examination" establishes, as one of the proofs of the development of the Church, and puts in distinction with and almost in opposition to each other "a regular ministry of offices," and "irregular ministries," gifts not arranged into office order;18 when it adds,19 that the posterior origin of an office (that of elders), indicates that it was naturally superior to an office of more ancient institution," the "Examination" does but multiply assertions entirely devoid of foundation and of proofs. Was the apostleship, the most ancient of offices, naturally inferior to the others? Besides, apostleship was an office before it was a gift; what then is a gift brought into the regular order of office? The gift of tongues dates from Pentecost itself. Miracles, healings, prophesyings, all sorts of gifts, which have no connection with offices, are found in the Church from the beginning. The whole system of the "Examination" is nothing but a system.

When, in speaking of the church in Corinth,20 the "Examination" takes the liberty of affirming that there was "a marked distinction between free ministries, to which the edification of the Church is entrusted, and the offices of elders and bishops, the place of which would perhaps have been encroached upon by the gifts, if the

apostleship had not come to occupy it, and to fulfil for the moment its functions," whence did he draw this? There may perhaps have been more gifts in one church than in another; but who says that, in the epistle to the Corinthians, Paul fulfils for the moment the duties of elder or deacon? Can pastors and elders of the Canton of Neufchatel say, with Paul, in this epistle, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord?"

Moreover, the manner in which the ministry of Paul, "as of one born out of due time," began, overturns the whole system of the "Examination." Nor does the author say anything at all about it. He speaks indeed of his consecration; but that is quite a different question. The fact is, that Paul, who was an apostle, "not of men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead "(Gal. i: i), could not possibly figure in any development of "human order." And it is on this that Paul insists absolutely in the epistle to the Galatians. And it is worth remarking, that after that this apostleship, which is neither of men nor by man, is shewn us in activity, the other apostles disappear entirely from the biblical history of the Acts.

Section 5

Glance at the National Presbyterian Church as at Present Established.

These last are but observations concerning details. Let us come to facts—that is to say, to what concerns the National Presbyterian Church as at present established. However ingenious theories may appear on paper, what

have the two orders of things, I am about to present, in common?

The one, that an apostle, who is neither of men nor by man, chooses men, some of whom were already prophets, and the others distinguished for piety, and* as to the latter, confers a gift on them by the imposition of hands.

The other, that in a certain geographical circumscription there is found established, as a sort of monarchical government, a pastor, who may even not be converted (as happens in the immense majority of cases), but who is established according to a system limited to a nation, and established over an unconverted flock or still worse, pretends to feed those who are really the sheep of the Lord; who (what an apostle made no pretence to, for it is to put oneself above God, instead of being His servant) pretends to have the right to refuse and to reject those whom the Lord Himself might send for the blessing of His true sheep, and who, perhaps, raises the police against them.21 And do not say that I have not the right to suppose this pastor established according to a human order, to be unconverted.

I have this right, and justly so, since the “Examination” will have it that the national institution is of God; still more since it will have it that, even in the case in which the pastor, established according to this system, might propagate “mischievous and poisonous doctrine,” the thing should be left to God, and the poor sheep to the care of the wolf. I am bound to enquire whence the right which makes this pastor a monarch derives its source. It is not derived from God, assuredly; for it is not God who has chosen him. It is either a Council of State, or, save

an appeal to the Minister of Public Worship, a Consistory composed of the principal tax-payers, or a king, or a patron who has purchased this right for money. This is what is said by pious ministers, who thereby shew the judgment they pass on systems they themselves have long defended, accusing of schism and radicalism, those who, their hearts broken by such a state of things, had judged it their duty to abandon it. The force of circumstances has constrained them to acknowledge as an institution not only human, but injurious to the rights of Christ, f that which the “Examination” still defends and maintains as being an institution of Christ,22 and, as defenders of the slighted rights of Christ over His Church, the ministers of whom we speak have stood forward to vindicate them against the same institution whose cause the “Examination” endeavours to plead.

Think, Christians, think of such a system, in presence of the love of Christ for His Church!

Another question presents itself. According to the “Examination,”23 the present ministerial order, a fusion of divine gifts and human office, concentrates the guidance of the flock in one office, that of elders, and this office in one man. It adds, “This ministry of one man ought to seek to reinforce and multiply itself through the gifts which the Spirit of God grants to the members of the flock, whether by associating these gifts with himself officiously, as the present office of elders offers him the means of doing, or by encouraging and directing these gifts in their private exercise.”

What is, at bottom, this liberality, this generosity? Nothing but, without perhaps the consciousness of it,

the usurpation of the place of Christ in the exercise of His sovereignty over His Church.

Let us even suppose, to give the “Examination” the greatest possible advantage as to its ground—let us suppose these concentrating ministers to be in every place converted and truly elders, here is our question:—Who is it that has given them the right to accept or refuse the gifts which are exercised freely? What passage of scripture can afford any presumption that Christ has conferred such a right upon them?

We go farther still and concede still more. Let us suppose for an instant that these ministers, each of whom is one man, invested with one office, which concentrates in itself the guidance of the flock, and which is the fusion of a gift and an office, were in a true position: are not the evangelists, teachers, pastors, prophets, who are not “mediatized,” the servants of Christ responsible to Christ, and to Christ alone? Are they perchance responsible to those who hold office? Nothing approaching to such a thought is found in the word. Has Christ the right to give such ministries? And, if He gives them, to whom are they responsible?

Alas! in the system which is sought to be sustained, but which the word of God does not sustain, it is a question, in fact, neither of the Church of God, nor of ministry in the Church of God.

That which is in question is a geographical district, under the dominion of such and such a sovereign, or in the territory of such and such a state. This district is a parish. All the inhabitants are made Christians of; in certain countries24 civil rights even are attached to this qualification of being a member of the established

church. According to the system, all spiritual movement outside this arrangement is prohibited. At a determined age, persons take the sacrament for the first time; and there are countries where it is only after the accomplishment of this act, that custom permits young people to go and drink and dance. When, by sacrament first taking, they have become completely Christians, they may then go. But for this parish a minister is necessary. And if it is in this manner that Christians are made, it is not astonishing that ministers are made at the university.

And let not people cry out that these are only abuses. No, this is the system. According to the system, in fact, according to the principle described in the "Examination," and according to that which exists as a fact in the national churches, one must recognize a Socinian minister, or, if you will, an unconverted minister, as well as a pious minister. He has the same rights in the church ', and the minister of Christ, whom the national establishment may have placed in either the same parish or a neighbouring one, is bound to recognize him and to leave the sheep of Jesus in the hands of such a man.

And the Bible is quoted to justify this institution! And it is quoted, because it shews us that there were over churches elders, and, as is also said, angels! Separation is complained of. Separation from what? From a system which, according to the new light of a part of the clergy themselves, denies the rights of Christ over His Church, compels the sheep of Jesus to remain in poisonous pastures, and places the Church, bound hand and foot, in the hands of men. And why not separate from it? Is it the Church of Christ? I think not; it is not what I have

found in the word. And if it is not the Church of Christ, why then be of it? Truly pious ministers will answer, “We do not ask you to acknowledge unconverted ministers.” In that case, why do they acknowledge them themselves? And how do they think that we can acknowledge, in their person, a system which they condemn as to others?

To say that the principle of the existing ministry is only the fusion of gift and office, while, in the greater number of cases, there are, on the part of those who are invested with it, neither gifts, nor even conversion, is only to deceive oneself about words in a very serious matter. That which is practiced in the national institution in order to prepare and to make ministers, is not, as is pretended, what Paul commends to Timothy, when he says, “The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also,” 2 Tim. 2:2. No. To instruct young men at a university with a view to ordain them afterwards, be they or be they not gifted or converted, is not to commit certain truths to faithful men; it is to instruct and train for a profession young men whose faithfulness has not yet been able to be proved, and who have not one of the qualities requisite for an elder. In certain cases there was a union of gifts and offices. That which is now in vogue is a vast system which has no reference to either the one or the other.

No, the inhabitants of a geographical district do not form the Church of Christ. No, a ministry which joins together and confounds in one mass and with the same rights the converted and the unconverted, unbelievers and believers, gifted and ungifted, is not the true ministry, but a confusion established by man.

It is in vain for the author of the “Examination” to connect and fuse together gifts and offices. I defy him to bring forward, in the biblical history of ministry, anything similar to the system in which he acts and which he maintains. And if the body of Christ is one, how can these geographical districts be that body? That in one particular town the children of God should all unite together and form a body, can be understood; the Bible has made me understand it: but that in the constitution of the Church there should be any thing like nationalism, any thing like nationality in the matter of the Church, is what is not found in the word of God.

No, the word of God does not speak to us of the fusion of gifts and offices; it does not at all justify the system of the “Examination.” It shews us, outside all human order, the extraordinary call of Paul, a call which the “Examination” leaves entirely aside. It is to Paul that had been committed the revelation of a mystery hidden from ages and from generations (Col. 1:26), a revelation, observe, precisely of this truth of the Church of God, one body, united to Christ on high; and Paul particularly insists that the ministry which was intrusted to him has no relation with that which went before.

Section 6

The Pretended Progress of the Church.

In his preoccupation relative to the progress of the Church, or more especially the progress of ministry in the Church, the author of the “Examination” discovers three epochs, three periods in the history of christian ministry.25 He takes as a starting point pure apostolic ministry: as his second period simultaneous ministry of gifts exercised freely, and of offices.

“But soon,” adds the “Examination,” “the extraordinary abundance of guts cUminishes, and the time arrives, when to the flowers of the early season more durable fruits are to succeed… The apostleship comes to an end… The office of elder is appointed of God as a provision in each flock for the maintenance of order and discipline… This third phase … may be called the epoch of episcopal or presbyterian ministry.”

Apostleship and gifts, flowers of the early season, give place to more durable fruits. Is it possible to fall into such an illusion? Are we to put among the number of these durable fruits the encroachment of popery, the universal worship of the Virgin, and the torturing of those rare and precious witnesses of the Lord, who came at long intervals, during many ages, to be put to death by those whom the “Examination” calls durable fruits, in comparison with the spring flowers of gifts and apostleship?

Is Protestant rationalism one of these durable fruits? Does the author think that his church of Neufchatel has lasted from the time of Jesus?

Has all sense of the affection of Christ for His Church and all memory disappeared at the same time?

This presbyterian phase, how long did it last in the primitive Church? Not even a century. And even, if we are to refer to the opinions of men, this phase, which the “Examination” considers as the third, has the anteriority in the eyes of many others, who consider the apostolic or episcopal phase the primitive one.

Just see to what degree the idea of the progress of the Church has misled the “Examination.”

Making mention of I Corinthians 13, where Paul shews us that our present knowledge is far from being comparable to that which we shall have when we see face to face, the author is carried away so far as to say: 26 “St. Paul then evidently distinguishes in this chapter three states of the Church; that of infancy, during which God grants it these extraordinary gifts, like the flowers with which a father adorns the cradle of his new-born child; the age of youth, which embraces all the earthly pilgrimage of the Church since the termination of the apostolic age, and of which faith, hope, and love form the imperishable crown; finally, the full age or the heavenly state into which love alone enters and dwells without changing its nature, because then God is all in all, and God is love.”

“The cessation of the apostleship should itself, however strange this may appear, be looked at as progress… The apostles were for the Church, in its state of infancy, tutors and guardians. But, when the divine child had begun to grow, when the hour of its coming of age, of free and spontaneous development, had sounded for it, as God had given apostles in His grace, He also withdrew them in His grace.”27 It is sufficient to read the chapter in question, to assure oneself that Paul makes no mention in it of the state of the Church, but of the nature of the knowledge we possess. This is so certain that the author of the “Examination” himself has felt that he was misinterpreting this passage, and has sought to answer the objections which he foresees.

Here is the reasoning of the apostle: “We know in part… when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” There is a partial knowledge

which belongs to the Church here below. This knowledge will be perfect above.

The “Examination” says, on the contrary, that knowledge itself disappears entirely, to make way for faith, hope, and love, an imperishable crown which serves as an intermediate term between gifts, or the state of infancy, and heaven. Thus, for the author, the loss of knowledge, of apostleship, of prophecy, is in reality progress. For him, again, it is not when that which is perfect is come, that knowledge is done away; it is during the entire period between the apostles and the return of Christ.

It is impossible not to see that he is entirely mistaken. What a thought! The Church superior now to the state in which it was in the times of the apostles! Does the author see that around him? That the Canton of Neufchatel enjoys many of the blessings of Providence, that its clergy even contain in their midst pious men, I have neither any interest in contesting, nor desire to do so; but to say that the state of this church, the great mass of which lies, on the author’s confession, in the darkness of nature, is superior to the apostolic state, is what, I am sure, even the “Class”28 would be ashamed of. And do you know, reader, what is the foundation for saying this? On this, that there is more faith, hope, and love: and that the spring flowers of apostles, prophets, gifts, and knowledge have given place to love, faith, and hope, which now exist and which have, in fact, existed since we have had the apparent misfortune, but real blessing, of losing these ephemeral gifts of infancy.

“If people wish to prove a fall of the Church,” says the “Examination,”29 “let them point out the cessation of

faith, love, and hope; but let them beware of adducing in proof a fact such as that of the cessation of gifts."

The author is mistaken in thinking that it is in the loss of gifts that I find the ruin of the Church. In some respects this loss may be a symptom, a mark of this ruin. The ruin is another thing. I shall beware of seeking to establish the cessation of faith, love, and hope. To say that these things-have ceased, would be to say that there is no longer a Christian in the world. Let him who is contented on that account to deny the ruin of the Church, be contented! But I will answer in a more explicit manner.

As concerning love, we see in Acts 2 and 4 what the Holy Ghost produced. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers… And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." "And great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them," etc.

Here are the flowers (we were in the habit of calling them fruits) which, alas, were too quickly lost; and we should have trouble to find them in the church which the "Examination" boasts of as being an advance on the apostolic state of things. Can the author of the "Examination," with his hand on his heart, say that there is real progress since the times of the apostles—that

love has not ceased? Ceased! No, it will never cease. But where will the author shew me anything to compare with what we read of in the Acts? If it is answered, that this did not last, then it is acknowledged that the fruits of the Spirit in love have not lasted.

There are things yet far more precise. In the epistle to the Philippians, the epistle in which the author says we have the proof of the progress and development of the Church, because in it the apostle addresses himself to the bishops and deacons— here is what Paul says as to the state of Christians, when referring to Timothy: “For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” Were faith, hope, and love progressing?

In the second epistle to Timothy, which the author also quotes in proof of his system, we see the heart of the apostle broken because of the state of the Church. He is, as it were, astonished that a Christian should not be ashamed of him, and, on account of this, prays for a special blessing on his house; 2 Tim. 1:16. Compare this epistle with that which we have quoted from the Acts, and see what was the state of the Church as to faith, love, and hope. The author may endeavour to make us think that the existence of his parochial monarchy compensates us for it; but how sad to see a brother undertake such a task.

One thing, perfectly certain, is that, in writing to Timothy, the apostle did not look for a progressive development of good. He had the foreknowledge of just the contrary. “This know also,” says he, “that in the last days perilous times shall come,” 2 Tim. 3:1. God had

been preparing the heart of His imprisoned servant by making him feel the miseries of the Church. “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge,” 2 Tim. 4:16. Where were then faith, hope, and love? Let this touching and last appeal of the apostle, who was ready to be offered (chap. 4:6), serve as an answer.

Perhaps Paul elsewhere renders a different testimony to the real progress of the Church, through the means of his departure? What does he say to those elders who, according to the system, ought to have replaced him, and even more? “I know this, that after my departing 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 20:29, 30.

Does Peter give a different testimony? No. For him, what fills up the picture of the last times are mockers and false teachers, who will privily bring in damnable heresies; 2 Pet. 2:1.

And were these last times slow in arriving? No. John, the last of the apostles, John, who, perhaps, gives us to see “angels,” but at the same time the Church in decay, and ready at the end to be spued out of the Lord’s mouth, this John makes us know that in his time these things were not delayed. “Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time,” 1 John 2:18. Why whereby, if there had been real progress other than in evil?

However amiable and sincere he may be, I pity the man who, in presence of such testimonies, can believe in a

real progress of the Church in good through the absence of the apostles. I pity still more a body of pastors who, comparing themselves with the apostolic work and condition, can put themselves forward as the proof of a true progress.

The revelation which, according to the divine knowledge, is given us, of the period of this real progress, only confirms the prophetic previsions and touching lamentations of the hearts of the apostles. Paul says to the Thessalonians, “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition… For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming,” 2 Thess. 2:3-8. And the Apocalypse, which, according to the “Examination” itself, “closes so admirably the New Testament,” shews us that the Church ends by being spued out of the mouth of the Lord, having already, in its first phase, left its first love. And when the things which are (the seven golden candlesticks, the seven churches, the state of the Church) have come to an end, the apostle speaks of the future, of “the things which shall be hereafter,” when the Church is no longer seen on the earth, and it is the progress of an apostate world towards its ruin and final judgment. The salt is removed from the earth, and all becomes corrupt. Little matters it. For the “Examination” it is real progress due to the disappearance, to the withdrawal of the apostles and of the care which they had over the Church.

The “Examination” speaks, it is true, of the precautions which Paul takes, before leaving this world, for the future of the Church. In fact, conscious by divine revelation that they were about to depart, the apostles, whose hearts were devoted to the welfare of the Church of Christ, exhort and conjure those who remained to watch, because evil was about to enter. Nothing more natural. But these elders, in whom people wish to see the successors and in some sort the heirs of the apostolate, already existed at the same time as the apostles. Paul died more than thirty years, and John more than sixty, after the Lord’s departure. There were then elders existing at the same time as the apostles, during a period of thirty or even sixty years. The elders therefore were neither the successors of, nor still less the substitutes for, the apostles, at the time of the departure of the latter. And that which, in his thesis of the progress of the Church, the author of the “Examination” had to shew, is that the elders were to walk better without the apostles than with their help; for, says the “Examination,” “the continuation of an authority such as the apostolic would have had a disproportionate weight in the scale of the destinies of the Church, and hindered its development, instead of forwarding it.”

After the elders had exercised superintendence and wrought energetically for nearly half a century, that the apostles press upon them that they should be faithful, and that they should watch with so much the more care when they themselves should be no longer present, is easily understood. And it is this which Paul says, in general, to the Philippians: “not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own

salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you." Paul exhorts the elders as he exhorts the Church, for he addresses himself to all. But, in fact, have these exhortations had as their result the establishment of the safety of the Church upon the faithfulness of its leaders? Let ecclesiastical history— and this history is that of the clergy— let ecclesiastical history answer the question. It is this history which has led infidels to say that the annals of the Church were those of hell.

To speak of durable fruits, as proof of the progress of the Church and of the gain it has found through the cessation of apostleship, to speak of a "shining covering" which vanishes while "the solid groundwork, the real and permanent elements of the life of the Church, remain and are developed,"30 is what none but a member of the clergy would have dreamt of. That the system of the clergy has been developed, on that point there is no doubt; that the blessing of the Church has been the result, is what history does not testify.

If the cessation of apostleship is a progress, why does the apostle say (Eph. 4) that the Lord has given some apostles, some, etc., until we all come in the unity of the faith, that we be no more children? That, in His grace and faithfulness, God has taken care that, spite of the unfaithfulness of man, there should be enough for those who rely on Him, is true. Blessed be His name for it! But this is not the question. The author affirms that what God had given (so that we should 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) was an "obstacle," a hindrance to this end being attained, and that this obstacle needed to be

removed to enable us to arrive at it. The apostle says that it was given to lead us there;—the author says it was removed with this object. Let faith in the word, the history of the Church, and the spiritual man, decide the question.

When leaving the Church, the last apostle might have said (adds the “Examination”), it is expedient for you that I go away.31 Not only did he not say so, but, on the contrary, Paul said: “Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you,” Phil. 1:24. And he says this in that epistle to the Philippians cited by the author32 to shew that the apostle represented the elders and deacons as an advance before which he himself was to disappear. And when Paul must needs depart, he conjures Timothy to watch and to continue faithful, because everything would go wrong after his departure.

Let it not be thought that I exaggerate the bearing of the views of the “Examination.” We have seen it: he says expressly that it was in His grace God withdrew apostleship, the continuation of which would have weighed with a disproportionate weight in the scale of the destinies of the Church, and have hindered its development.

That (the foundation once laid) God should have seen fit to leave the Church to its responsibility, can be understood; but it is entirely false to say that the apostles did no more than lay the foundation, and to present them as an obstacle to the development of the Church; while they themselves, more than any others, laboured in the Church for its development, for its government, and sought to keep it in safety against the wiles of the enemy.

As to the question of knowing whether the Church has been faithful to the responsibility which devolved on her —and this would be the true question to resolve in order to establish the progress or the failure of the Church— the author refuses to treat it. Here is again a fragment of that which he gives us instead!33—

"The Church (after the apostolate) had nothing more to receive.... From a child it had become a young man. The Lord opened to it a long and glorious career, that of external independence, in order to realize the internal and voluntary dependence which is the only true dependence. For that, apostleship, necessary as a beginning, would no longer have been of any use—would on the contrary have been a restraint."

In fact, apostleship would have been an excessive restraint upon the Church in the career it has followed. When such thoughts are cherished—thoughts contradicted for the conscience and heart by all the history of the Church, there is good reason for setting aside the truth which closes the entire word: "Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus." A long career was not in the thoughts of those who insisted on the personal coming of Jesus, as putting an end to their tribulations, nor of those who, after the Lord Himself insisted among the brethren that they should constantly wait for the coming of Jesus, nor in the mind of Him who made it a sin to think, "My lord delayeth his coming." And (without dwelling longer on this truth, infinitely precious and important though it be) we will ask why, if the cessation of apostleship was necessary, in order to "realize internal and voluntary dependence," the absence of the monarch of a parish would not be equally a benefit? For the dependence is to be internal and

voluntary. And when you say internal dependence, you do not mean in the interior of the Church, for the apostles were there no less than the elders. And if it is a question of individuals and of their internal dependence, the elders would not be less hurtful to it than the apostles. If the care of the one was useful, the care of the others would have been still more useful. What is perfectly certain, is that there were neither parishes nor monarchs; and what is still more so, is that at that time the Church was not made up of a mass of unconverted people circumscribed in given geographical limits.34 Section 7 View of the Church.

The most serious evil that there is in all these reasonings, by the help of which it is sought to discredit the views put forth on the ruin of the Church, is that the relationships and very existence of the Church are thereby denied.

This denial of the Church, Messrs. Rochat and Olivier have formally made in their writings. Wolf has acted in the same manner; it is, moreover, what I meet with in private every day.

The idea of the Church has no existence in the mind of the greater part of those who oppose my views. Others have such an idea of it as makes them take the fruits of the sin of man for those of the grace of God.

If it were felt that there is a Church, the bride of Christ, a holy body formed down here on earth by the presence of the Holy Spirit, the reasonings by which it is sought to deny the ruin of the Church would be, for the greater part, impossible; and it would not even be attempted to deny the ruin in the midst of which we find ourselves.

I will explain myself as to what I mean by the Church. The Church is a body subsisting in unity here below, formed by the power of God by the gathering together of His children in union with Christ who is its Head; a body which derives its existence and its unity from the work and the presence of the Holy Spirit come down from heaven, consequently on the ascension of Jesus the Son of God, and of His sitting at the right hand of the Father after having accomplished redemption.

This Church, united by the Spirit, as the body to the Head, to this Jesus seated at the Father's right hand, will, no doubt, be manifested in its totality, when Christ shall be manifested in His glory; but, meanwhile, as being formed by the presence of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, it is essentially looked at, in the word of God, as subsisting in its unity on the earth. It is the habitation of God by the Spirit, essentially heavenly in its relationships, but having an earthly pilgrimage, as to the scene in which it is actually found and in which it ought to manifest the nature of the glory of Christ, as His epistle of commendation to the world, for it represents Him and is in His place. It is the bride of the Lamb, in its privileges and calling. It is presented as a chaste virgin to Christ for the day of the marriage of the Lamb. Evidently this last thought will have its accomplishment in resurrection; but, what characterizes the Church, as being quickened according to the power which has raised Christ from among the dead and set Him at the right hand of God, is the realization and manifestation of the glory of its Head by the power of the Holy Ghost, before Jesus its Head is revealed in Person.

Those who compose the Church have other relationships besides. They are children of Abraham. They are the house of God over which Christ is head as Son. But these last characters do not detract from what we have been saying; still less do they annul it.

At the beginning, the truth of the Church, powerfully set forth by the apostle Paul, was as the centre of the spiritual movement; and those who were not perfect, still attached themselves to this centre, though at a greater distance. The Church is, rather, the circle nearest to the only true centre, Christ Himself. It was His body, His bride. This truth, lost now for the generality of Christians, (and it is a ground of shame), has become a means of separation, like the tabernacle of Moses, set up outside the unfaithful camp (Ex. 33); because, if, according to the principle of the unity of the body taught by the apostle, one acts outside the world, most Christians are unwilling to follow, and, while keeping up worldliness, they cannot do so. How, indeed, could they gather outside of that which they are keeping up?

This lack of faith has a sorrowful consequence. Relationships with God are taken up, belonging, it is true, to those of which the Church is composed, but inferior to those of the Church itself, and they are taken in order to form with them a system which is put in opposition to the most precious of all the relationships of the Church with God. People insist that the children of God are Abraham’s children, which is true; but they wish to place them at this level, in order to deny the position of the bride of Christ. They will have it that they are branches grafted in, in place of the Jews, so as to reduce them to the level of the blessing and principles of

the Old Testament, and this, in order to avoid the responsibility of the position in which God has set us, and, thereby, the necessity of a confession of our fall. They allow, in a general sense, that we are the house of God, which is true; a house in which there are vessels to dishonour: and they make use of this truth to justify a state of things which has left outside everything that can belong to the affections and the heart of a bride.

Let Christians give heed to it!

Hence, the postponement of the return of Christ to epochs which are connected with the judgment He will execute on an unfaithful house and a rebellious world. Hence also, the loss of the desire for His coming, a desire peculiar to the bride and inspired by the Spirit who dwells in and animates her.

The proofs of the existence of such a Church are beyond all contradiction, and, although I have already produced them elsewhere, it is good, even if it were but for one soul, to recall some of them, so that they may act on the conscience.

Section 8

Proofs in Support.

1 Corinthians 12 is positive on this subject.

“By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (v. 13), one body in which the gifts are exercised; the exercise of these gifts, as well as the baptism itself of the Spirit, demonstrates that it is a question of a body on the earth.

“God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers, after that, miracles; then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues,” 1 Cor. 12:28. He had set them

neither in such and such a church, nor in the Church gathered to heaven.

The epistle to the Ephesians, almost entirely, treats this subject. Christ is the Head of His body which is the Church; chap. 1:22, 23. There is one body and one Spirit; chap. 4:4. This body grows by the ministry of that which every joint supplies: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers; chap. 4:16, 11. It is very certain that it is on earth that this takes place.

Paul wrote to Timothy, that he might know how to behave himself in the "house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," 1 Tim. 3:14, 15. There was then a Church, which was one, the pillar and ground of the truth, a body manifested in unity upon the earth, a bride who desired the coming of her Bridegroom in order to the accomplishment of her blessing; who, meanwhile, sought to glorify her Bridegroom, and who, by the power of the Spirit who was in her, manifested the glory in which her Head was, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. And if Jesus, her Bridegroom, was in heaven, invisible to the natural sight, she it was who was visible on earth for the manifestation of Christ's glory; and she was on earth Christ's epistle of commendation, known and read of all men; 2 Cor. 3.

That God makes sure to this Church, seen in His eternal counsels of grace, an unfailing portion of glory in heaven, is certain. That, in consequence, the gates of Hades cannot prevail against that which Christ has founded on the confession of the Son of the living God, nothing again more certain. But to employ such precious truths to set aside the responsibility under which the

Church is laid that she should be down here a witness to the glory of Jesus, is to use the certainty of grace to destroy the necessity of a life answering to it.

Christ asks that we may be one, so that the world may believe; John 17:21. That which Christ asks for, is a visible unity, a unity which witnesses to the nature, the love, and the holiness of Christ, and even to His power; and that, in order that the world which knows not Christ, neither can see Him, may learn, by the effects which it sees, what is the real source of grace which is hidden from it and beyond its reach.

But a world church, visible, and a spiritual church, invisible, there is what, on the one side as well as on the other, destroys completely the thought and counsel of God, not, assuredly, in their eternal accomplishment, but where God has always placed, in the first instance, that accomplishment, that is to say, in the responsibility of man. God has always first entrusted to man as responsible, that which He intends to accomplish later, according to the efficacy of His own power.

The world church is a denial of the nature, the love, the holiness, and the affections of Christ, as it is of the nature, the love, the holiness, and the affections of the bride, while it pretends to realize her unity. The invisible Church is null as a witness in this world, by the very fact of its invisibility. Rather would it serve as a witness of the powerlessness of the Spirit and the powerlessness of Christ Himself, to disengage His own from this world which has rejected Him, and to gather them in oneness by virtue of His Spirit, and as an evident demonstration of His glory—to gather them, as the faithful bride of His heart who belongs to Him alone.

The world church is founded on the compatibility of Christ and evil in the most intimate relations; it denies thus the character of Christ. The invisible Church, as such, is null in testimony. It is the denial of the power of Christ to gather His own, to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad, and to manifest in them, thus gathered, His power and glory.

That the Church, alas! is invisible, is but too true. And if it is so, it is in a fallen condition, it is unfaithful to the glory of its Head, it has failed of the object of its establishment on the earth.

To own such a truth as this, to confess it as a fearful sin, a sin perhaps irremissible as to the integral re-establishment of God's system, to confess in this respect our sin and our iniquity, this is what places us in our true position on this point.

To justify such a state of things, to put it forward as regular and providential, as that which ought to be, is to shew hardness in sin; it is to lack the heart and affections which seek the glory of Christ, and which shew that we have the consciousness of our relationship with Him as His bride. How afflicting is this!

If the Church ought to have manifested on the earth the glory of Christ, it is very certain that a visible church, worldly and corrupted, does not do so; and that, just the contrary, by the very avowal of those who sustain it and plead its cause, it only hides those who are Christ's. It is not less evident that no more does an invisible church, by the very fact of being invisible, manifest on the earth the glory of Christ.

Let those then who seek to justify such a state of things say openly that the Church was never responsible, by its

faithfulness upon earth, to manifest the glory of Christ; if not, let them own that we have fallen.

I appeal to the whole of the New Testament, to all the principles of the word of God, to the history of the Acts, to the testimony of the epistles, and to the consciences of saints, to judge whether the Church has maintained the testimony to the glory, the holiness, the love of her Bridegroom, and whether she has maintained it as a faithful bride, who ought to be occupied with it during the absence of her Bridegroom, who knows but her Bridegroom, who is watchful for His glory and continues faithful to Him, all the more because He is absent.

Section 9

Observations on the Apostleship of Paul.

We have finished with the system of the “Examination” as tc the progress of the Church.

We have had opportunity to remark, more than once, in passing, that the apostleship of Paul is entirely opposed to the system of a human ministry. Before finally bidding farewell to the “Examination” it remains for us to glance at the history it gives us of the apostleship of Paul.35 This history exhibits a boldness which, truly, can only be found with the clergy.

Let us leave the “Examination” to speak.

“From his mother’s womb St. Paul had been chosen to become a distinguished instrument as a preacher of the gospel. Nevertheless, when the decisive hour has arrived at which his ministry is to begin, how is he called to it?”

Here, the “Examination” cites Acts 13:1-4, and adds both in a note and in the text:

“How, in this passage, both the action of God and the action of man, far from excluding each other, admirably unite to produce, first, the ministry of an evangelist, and by and by the apostleship of St. Paul. St. Paul, though long ago an apostle in the plan of God, appears here at first only as a prophet and teacher; he becomes an evangelist by the imposition of hands… It is only by degrees that he acquires in the eyes of the Church that apostolical position and authority which, for a long time, he has possessed in the divine thought. Long before, both he and Barnabas have been called to this work by the Holy Spirit; nevertheless, it is by the intermediate agency of their colleagues that their definitive vocation is effected. They are certainly filled with a special gift for this ministry; nevertheless, this gift is not removed from, but submitted to the recognition of the Church and to the imposition of hands. It is Snen who send them away, and vet it is the Holy Ghost who sends them.”

Thus, according to man’s idea, it is by degrees that Paul acquires, in the eyes of the Church, this apostolic position and authority, which he has long possessed in the divine thought; it is by the intervention of their colleagues that the definitive calling of Paul and Barnabas is operated; their gift is submitted to the recognition of the Church and the imposition of hands; it is men who send them away; and the system of the “Examination” is considered as justified.

Let us now listen to the word of God, and to Paul himself, for Paul also has given us a history of his call to the ministry.

“Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father… But 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 those which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto 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.... Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia... But of those who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me ... for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me... And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision," Gal. 1:1, 15-21; chap. 2:6-10.36 Paul thus absolutely denies a commission from his colleagues, the apostles. As to the colleagues whom the "Examination" gives him, they do not even enter into his thoughts. And even if it were so, it would not be the less singular for teachers to call to the apostleship one of their colleagues, while there were apostles at Jerusalem. But we know that Paul takes care to deny it in principle.

Let us also remember that, according to the "Examination,'* the work of the apostle was not an apostolic work. He was only an evangelist. It is true that, in this same journey, the Holy Spirit calls him an apostle; Acts 14:4. Little matters it, the "Examination" affirms that, by the imposition of hands, he only became an evangelist. And nevertheless, according still to the "Examination," it is man who produces, in conjunction

with God, his apostleship. When? The “Examination” does not say; it only says “soon “and “by degrees.”

According to the “Examination,” God effects the calling of Paul by the intervention of his colleagues. What does this mean? “The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul,” and those to whom He says it, commend them to the grace of God (such are the very words of Scripture, Acts 14:26) by the imposition of hands. And Paul is again a second time recommended by the brethren to the grace of God (Acts 15:40), when he undertakes a fresh journey.

Men, says the “Examination,” send them away. From what may not a system be drawn? Martin translates: “laissèrent partir” (“let them depart”); the Lausanne version says: “ils les laissèrent aller” (“they let them go”). It is not a question of anything but of that feeling of affection and harmony which, while letting him go, accompanies with its holy desires the one who departs and perhaps goes with him a little way on his road, as a witness of the heart accompanying him. There is not the least idea of a mission being given.37 The same expression is found in Acts 15:30 and 33. The brethren, sent to Antioch, take leave of those in Jerusalem; and after having passed some time at Antioch, take leave of the brethren there in peace, in order to return to the apostles at Jerusalem.

The voice of God calls prophets to separate Paul and Barnabas for the work, and these prophets recommend them to the grace of God. And the “Examination” sees in this man joining himself to God to authorize ministry! and, in order still to maintain the honour of man, Paul is represented as being, in his work, but an evangelist. And

all apostolic commission is denied to him. Paul becomes by degrees an apostle in the eyes of the Church, according to that which he was in the thoughts of God.

It is thus that the “Examination” gives the history. I trust that those who labour will become by degrees, in the eyes of those who blame them, what they are in the thoughts of God, and that “soon.”

Third Part On the Free Churches.

Introduction

Christians attached to the word of God have shewn not only that the clerical system is not found in it, but also that it is contrary to the principles which it contains, and in fine, that the national system is in opposition to all that is there said of the Church.

All this is now admitted by the Evangelical Christians who exercise the most influence in the religious movements of ecclesiastical bodies. We have already seen that, in the eyes of the “Archives of Christianity” and of the “Reformation,” clericalism is an evil, and it is anti-scriptural. Not long ago brethren who separated from this state of things, were schismatics. But now, what was then maintained in opposition to these brethren, and which was maintained as being according to God, is by their avowal a system which denies all the rights of Christ. This is rapid progress.

People therefore substitute for this system which they no longer dare to present as resting on a divine foundation, other principles upon which they raise a new edifice, principles which we are about to examine.

These principles are summed up in a few words:

The complete, entire, and often even avowed abandonment of the word of God. The denial of the action of the Holy Spirit.

The Christians of whom we speak are quite willing to be freed from the yoke of the state. That one can understand. But it is in order to establish over the flock, without being held in check by the state, the still heavier yoke of ministry. Now the ecclesiastical yoke, the yoke of the clergy, is of all the most intolerable. It is the weight of the name of God attached, and attached without restraint, to the will and the iniquity of man, because evil is clothed with the authority which ought to have laid hold of the conscience. The world has seen the effects of it.38

Chapter 1 On the Scotch Movement and that of the Free Church on the Continent.

People are in error on the continent, on the subject of the Scotch movement. This movement has been essentially popular. The king of England and the great noblemen, episcopal for the most part, had the right to nominate to a very large number of parishes, which, for a century past, had been a subject of contestation in the Church of Scotland. The people wished to name their pastors. Attempts at accommodation were made; they failed. The ministers and the evangelical elders put themselves at the head of the movement. The civil tribunals having constrained certain parishes to receive ministers named by the patrons, the separation took place. The evangelical ministers left the synod; the people of the parishes left the churches. The mass of the population found thus a means of escaping from the ancient rights of patronage of the episcopalian

aristocracy, which the tribunals and the whole civil order maintained in these rights.

In the Canton de Vaud, the inverse of this is the case. The popular cause is nationalism subjected to the state. In Scotland, the nationals are the ministers without the people. On what side is that found in Switzerland?

Churches are not made on paper—they are formed by faith. A church of the multitude can only be the result of a powerful principle acting upon the masses. This principle is found either in superstition, or, as at the Reformation, in the remarkable intervention of Providence, which, favouring the movement of faith, where abuses disgust natural conscience or clash with the will of man, throws the mass on the side of the good which is acting by the grace of God. It is this which explains, on the one hand, the history of all false religions; on the other hand, the history of the Reformation, and, finally, on a smaller scale, the Scottish movement.

There exists nothing that answers to this in the dreams of a free church, in which those minds take pleasure, who, at the present day, while opening for themselves a way in which the nation does not follow them, seek to unite, the nation being wanting in this combination, popularity with the preservation of existing institutions. In order to popularise their cause and their church, they grant it certain rights and certain privileges, preserving, all the while, for themselves the consecrated system, the citadel of the clergy. Let them, however, understand this: if there are popular rights in the church, the people themselves will be judges of them. Such is the popular principle—the principle of the age. The people will

exercise their rights themselves, in fact as well as in title. That will be their affair. The ministers will have the task of protecting, if they can, the rights they have given to themselves, so far as these rights are compatible with the will and action of the people. Their business will be to watch over the preservation of their clericalism. The people will dispose of the rest, and the ministers will be, if they can, their clergy. There will result from this, under whatever variety of form, independent dissenting churches, with a clergy whose efforts will tend to bind the whole into a Presbyterian bundle, in order to give it, if it can, harmony and strength.

This is, I venture to predict, the future of the Free Church of the Canton de Vaud. This is what will happen wherever ministers seek to organize a free-church system, by contriving beforehand its mechanism.

On a larger theatre than the Canton de Vaud, the ministers would probably succeed in acquiring a stronger link among themselves and a more decided clerical position; but, at bottom, each of them, in his locality, would find himself to be the pastor of a dissenting church with a congregation of the people as his flock. Their part would be purely to preserve clericalism. Sad task! A task to which, nevertheless, where this attempt has taken place, their operations and reasonings are reduced.

The Free Church lacks a first principle of power. There is found in it neither the principle of God, nor the principle of the man of the age. That there may be found, on the part of certain individuals, a vital principle, true faith, I do not doubt. But, evidently, that is not the question. Powerful principles act noiselessly,

but cause themselves to be spoken of. The Free Church speaks a great deal about itself, before even having taken its rise.

Let us, however, examine its principles, as far as it has put them forth.

Chapter 2 On the Constitution of the Free Church of the Canton de Vaud.

In entering upon the constitution of the Free Church of the Canton de Vaud, the only one which has hitherto been formed on this side of the Rhine,39 I desire to express my sincere respect for many of the persons who form part of this association, and to testify to many among them, whom I have more or less known, the cordial affection which flows from the sweet conviction of our meeting one another again in the heavenly kingdom. This makes me all the more feel how grievous it is that such brethren should have thought it their duty to ally themselves, or at least should have appeared to ally themselves to any political party, and to falsify thereby, in the eyes of the world, a religious principle and a walk which, with the sacrifices by which it was accompanied, made them respected by good men, even of opinions contrary to their own. United, alas! to persons who do not share their faith, these brethren, by the very attacks to which they are exposed, figure as a political party, and appear rather to undergo the consequences of this, than to bear the cross for the sake of Jesus. This position has had the effect of causing Christianity and the blessed name of Jesus to sustain the reproach of serving as a cloak to a party which was seeking to clothe itself with the influence of that name. How much happier would it have been for these

brethren to preach that name without alloy, in the beauty and purity which are proper to it, in the midst of the irritation of passions, on whatever side they might have been shewn! If we suffer, let it be only for the name of Jesus; and let adversaries find no occasion of complaint against those who profess to serve the Lord, except concerning the law of their God.

Without doubt, it is a sincere conviction which has determined and impelled in the course they have followed, a large number of the brethren of whom we speak. But (and their opponents themselves have said this) conscience does not act by masses, but individually. In order to increase the influence of the movement, those who had decided convictions thought it their duty, as it appears, to wait for those who had not, or who had less fixed ones. This weakened the idea of a personal conviction. By that very means, conscience evidently was the loser.

The members of the Vaudois clergy were already under the necessity of raising these questions. Events had constrained them to do so. At the demand of the government, prolonged discussions had taken place amongst the clergy upon the change of the fundamental law of the Cantonal church. For a long while past, the clergy had supported and defended against all dissent the principles of nationalism. When, therefore, the greater part was seen to detach itself from the state and unite itself in an ecclesiastical body in order to maintain in concert, according to the very expressions of the constitution of the Free Church, the rights of Jesus Christ over His Church and the purity of evangelical ministry, people might have been astonished that never before had the rights of Christ presented themselves to

the minds of these men as disowned by the system which they had previously extolled and justified, not scrupling, moreover, to blame severely, those who, judging as they themselves now judge, were acting individually according to this conviction, and were separating themselves from a system guilty of such a slighting of the rights of the Lord.

Evidently, it is the system which, in their conviction, disregarded the rights of Jesus, and destroyed the purity of evangelical ministry. The act of the government, which served as an occasion for the retreat of a part of the clergy, is the proof of this. Moreover, the ministers who have resigned have not confined themselves to protesting by their resignation against this act, nor to going outside while waiting for its recall, nor to complaining against an isolated act of oppression, while still approving the system. They have done more. By the establishment of a new system, they have protested against the one which up to that time they had justified, and which, by their acknowledgment, denies the rights of Christ over His Church.

How does it happen that the new system, founded on such a declaration, should be the object of admiration to Christians who remain attached to the one to which this declaration applies? That does not belong to me to decide. It is good to remember [for fas est et ab hoste doceri] that conscience is an individual thing.

Let us now examine the system of the Free Church of the Canton de Vaud, such as it is set forth in its Constitution, the acceptance of which is obligatory upon every one who wishes to be a member of it.

Section 1

The Clergy, the Foundation of Unity in the Free Church.

While setting aside the state, rejecting all alliance with it, and while refusing at the same time to take the position of the Christians who had previously separated from nationalism, the founders of the Free Church wished, in constituting themselves as a body, to preserve some bond which these did not possess and which the state did not furnish. This bond is the clergy, the clerical body.

Plainly, the churches whose association composes the Free Church have no other according to its constitution. The unity subsists in the body of the clergy and there solely. This principle, the importance of which cannot be overestimated, was that of the Church as fallen in the first ages, that which ended in popery in contrast with the Church of God.

In the Protestant or Reformed Churches, the state serves as a link, as a principle of unity; they are, consequently, national churches. The Romish system has another centre of unity, which I need not stop to notice here. The dissenters, whatever may be additionally the unity of ideas and of habit of association with which analogous principles furnish them, are in general independents or congregationalists; that is to say, their churches, as churches, acknowledge no bond of unity among themselves.

There remains then to the Free Church but one principle which can and does really make of it a body; it is the clerical principle. Little matters it whether the clergy is composed of pastors or elders. It is they, a body of officials, distinct from the mass of believers, who alone give a character of unity to this bundle of churches. The

details of the Constitution shew it. General Church assemblies, church councils do not produce a shadow of unity! This unity resides in the synod; the synod is the principle of it. Everything which concerns the clergy is carefully kept in the hands of the clergy. The veto without a statement of motives is alone permitted to a flock to which a pastor is proposed. As to their internal matters, the assemblies may be consulted and may express their wishes when the church council calls them together; but all action whatever is reserved to the clergy.

The true unity of the Church of God, that is to say, the unity of the body of Christ on the earth, is completely excluded from the Free Church. There are “constituted bodies” but the idea of the body is lost.

The confusion of these two things is striking in the Sixth Article of the Constitution. “The Free Church is governed by constituted bodies who are to employ themselves, each according to the function assigned to it, in procuring the spiritual good of the Church and its members, so that the whole well proportioned and well joined together in all its parts should derive its increase from Christ, according to the power He distributes to each member,” Eph. 4:16. Now, it is perfectly certain that this passage of the epistle to the Ephesians applies solely to the body of Christy one upon earth, to the functions of its members, and to that body looked at on earth, insisting particularly on its unity flowing from its being the habitation of one Spirit (chap. 4:4)—an idea impossible here, because the Free Church of the Canton de Vaud has no pretensions to be the body of Christ, and its four constituted bodies are not members of the body of Christ.

It is sad, to say nothing more, to use the word of God, and that in its most precious and profound teachings, to apply it to that which is a creation of man, and to that which has no right to pretend to be what the passage cited speaks of. It is sad to seek to clothe a purely human system with the lustre of the blessing which is connected with the work of God. The Free Church of the Canton de Vaud is not, and still less are its constituted bodies, the body of Christ, nor the bride of Christ, however it may clothe itself with these beautiful names by debasing their meaning and force. “She is resolved,” say the authors of her Constitution, “to yield obedience (to Jesus Christ) as a faithful wife to her husband.” Wife! She is not a wife. There exists neither a Vaudois bride, nor a French bride, nor an English bride. By attaching such a name to bodies constituted by men, the idea of the unity of the body of Christ is falsified and lost, an idea of which the importance cannot be exaggerated.

The grand principles of the Free Church are then:

The establishment of a body of clergy, the only agent and bond of unity;

And the denial of the unity of the body of Christ, of that truth of which true Christians feel very particularly the need and importance.

In fact, it cannot be otherwise in a church of the multitude. How seek, how find, in an unconverted mass a principle of spiritual union? There is needed for this mass, a body in which, in theory, because of its public character, piety should be reputed to reside; a body which may act on it and give it a centre by maintaining religion in the midst of it. Let the action of the flocks, set aside by the “Constitution,” be introduced into the

general assemblies, and the Free Church will present the spectacle of the miseries of dissent, without having like it either separation from the world, or the safeguard of the conversion of its members.

Several details of the “Constitution of the Free Church” afford us a striking proof of the preoccupation of its authors, as to the maintenance of the clerical principle.

First, the nature of the quotations which are made from the word of God. Except the faulty application of a passage of Ephesians referred to above, the word of God, cited very carefully in order to support the authority of the clergy, is only quoted four times on other subjects, and these four quotations, have no reference to the. principles of the Free Church, but solely to general principles of piety, and they might have been equally met with in the first religious book that might be taken up. If it is a question, on the other hand, of exhibiting all the passages which appear suited to exalt the authority and importance of the clergy, the New Testament is rummaged through and through.

Here are further proofs of this preoccupation.

The laity may elect deputies to the synod. They have, besides, the power of refusing a minister, without having in addition the permission to express the motives of this refusal. To this is limited all the action which is granted them.

All discipline belongs exclusively to the clerical bodies.

All ministry has its source and direction in the synod. No one can act in the ministry of the word unless he be sent by the synod. People can neither receive nor open the door to a minister whom the synod has not sent or

sanctioned. “The synod occupies itself with evangelization and with all work that has for its object the advancement of the kingdom of God.”

In sum, it all comes to this: the clergy govern without being themselves under the authority of a government.

Section 2

Absence of the Holy Spirit from the Organization of the Free Church.

There is another thing which is more serious. In the whole of the organization of the Free Church the Holy Spirit is not even named; and, with the exception of the profession of faith contained in the second article of the “Constitution,” it mentions it nowhere. It could not do so. The Spirit of God is the power of the unity of the body of Christ. “There is one body and one Spirit,” Eph. 4:4. Now the Free Church of the Canton de Vaud has an altogether different unity, a bond of quite another nature. For it, such as it has constituted itself, there is one body, and it is that one body. “The churches which have been formed since the year of grace 1845, in the Canton de Vaud, are, by the present act, united into one body.” There is the unity of the Free Church. It is not that of the body of Christ, it is such as leaves this on one side. The Spirit of God is not, consequently, nor can He be, recognized nor sought as the One whose presence forms, characterizes, and establishes unity, and gives it as a banner the name of Jesus alone. One Spirit and one body is what does not enter into the framework of the unity of the Free Church. Its unity denies the other. “One body “excludes everything which is not itself.

The consequence of this is, that, uniting the defects of the corrupt church of the middle ages and of present

nationalism, the synod or the clergy which is substituted for the presence of the Holy Spirit, sets aside equally the action of the Holy Ghost in ministry. “The synod occupies itself with all work that has for its object the advancement of the kingdom of God.” That does not at all suppose the free action of the Holy Spirit nor does it permit the individual activity which is its fruit. There may be, if you will, instruments sent by the synod; but liberty of action, independently of a mission received from it, there is not.

As to what concerns the unity of the Church the body of Christ, as well as the free development of the work of the Spirit of God in the ministry of the word, the constitution of the Free Church is in complete antagonism with the most precious instructions of the word, with those which, for the days in which we live, are the most important that God has given us. Instead of maintaining, as it says, the rights of Jesus, it wars against the rights of the Holy Spirit. It gives itself liberty as regards the government, to take it entirely away from the Holy Spirit and the faithful led by Him.

One could not, in fact, deceive oneself to the extent of treating a church of the multitude, as a body dwelt in, animated and directed by the Holy Spirit. Neither its unity nor its action could be those of the Spirit. The Spirit is therefore set aside in order to substitute the clergy. Alas! the constitution of the Free Church equally sets aside the word of God.

What injustice! I shall be told. “It proclaims the divine inspiration, the authority and entire sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, of the Old and New Testament.” Entire sufficiency for what? Tell me a single article of the

“Constitution” which professes to be drawn from it. If the scriptures are sufficient for the ordering of the Church, what must be thought of a constitution drawn from sources entirely outside it—a constitution which has not even expressed the intention or the desire to take the word of God as a foundation? It is, at least, a kind of sincerity, for there is not a single article of the “Constitution “which has emanated from it. This “Constitution “establishes a purely human organization, which has no relation whatever to the principles of the word of God. Those who have taken part in it have owned that the word of God has served them neither as a starting point, nor as the foundation of their work. Where, indeed, should we find, in the word of God, that it is a question of church members of the age of twenty-one years, or of electoral rights, or of votes counted by number of heads, of elders elected for six years, and other similar things? An ingenious, and no doubt pious mind has conceived an ecclesiastical system according to its own will; this system, modified by the difficulties or by the light of others, has found its formula in the “Constitution “of the Free Church.

The Spirit and the word have, then, been left out no less than the unity of the body of Christ.

Section 3

The Doctrine of the Free Church.

The doctrine of the Free Church is found, alas! as defective as all the rest of it.

Nothing in it, perhaps, seriously wounds orthodoxy. One even sees in it the desire for piety. Nevertheless, its profession of faith, the doctrines of which the “Constitution” presents as being the “centre and

foundation of christian truth," is a meagre and even false confession, and its orthodoxy is of a very pale hue. The work of redemption is put in it in the last line, and would disappear almost entirely save for the enumeration of the facts on which it is founded.

What is, according to the "Constitution," the only means of salvation? The gift of Christ? The death of Christ? The eternal redemption which Christ has obtained for us? No: it is something in man, it is "living faith." And why "living"? True faith is no doubt living. Why then draw attention to this word? Because the tendency of this expression is to connect salvation with the qualification of a grace in us, instead of making it depend solely on the perfect work of Christ, on the righteousness of God, in which one partakes and to which one submits oneself by faith. I repeat it, the work of Christ, the redemption He has accomplished, are completely hidden behind the state of the soul which has embraced it. It is faith, and not the object of faith, which is put forward.

Here is something which is really nonsense: "Christ communicates to the faithful and to the Church all the graces necessary for regeneration." How can they be called "faithful" and "the Church" if they are not yet regenerated? What does that mean: "the graces necessary to regeneration"? The Holy Spirit then does not regenerate! He communicates to unconverted man certain graces necessary for regeneration, graces which man makes use of to regenerate himself. Is that the obligatory doctrine, to which a formal assent must be given in order to become a member of the Free Church?

It is added: "It is by the Holy Spirit whom He sends on the part of His Father." This is not according to the

truth. Jesus has sent this Comforter who shall abide for ever with the Church, as also it may be said that the Father has sent Him in Christ's name. As to what concerns the Holy Spirit, one finds thus, at the bottom of all the system of the Free Church, an unbelief and ignorance, involuntary no doubt, but not the less real.

Again: "He will return to put his own in possession of eternal life." One may, it is true, speak of eternal life to designate the power of the glory; but, met with thus by itself here, this expression only adds a little more vagueness to all the rest. The word of God teaches us and repeats to us that he who believes in the Son has eternal life;.

The work of redemption and the work of life are, alas! carefully lessened in this confession of faith. It is defective enough to be false, for a defective faith established as a rule is false. It is besides positively false in many of its assertions.

The Free Church admits discipline in principle and in fact. The manner in which it orders the exercise of it, the formula of its doctrines on this subject, betrays in a somewhat curious way the conflict between the need of pious souls and the difficulty which a church of the multitude puts in the way of it. The 31st Article of the "Constitution" lays down in principle that all discipline shall be in the hands of the pastor assisted by the church council. Next, if all gentle means fail, what will the council do? What rule will it follow? After having consulted the word of God, "it will follow the course which shall seem marked out thereby." There would have been in any case this faculty or this latitude without an article of Constitution. This is but a

declaration of incompetence, by which the assemblies will escape the organization intended by the "Constitution": for, suppose the church council saw in the word of God that the conscience of all the body ought to be concerned in discipline, the Free Church would see its constitution violated in its fundamental principle, and an independent authority established. Evidently, a church which should exercise this discipline in a regular manner, could not receive every member of a church not disciplined, even were he an elder, although he might belong to the Free Church; and, in fact, a church exercising this discipline would cease to form an integral part of the body, and would become a dissenting church. How, too, exercise this discipline by means of the conscience of the whole body, if the body is a church of the multitude? The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church becomes here an essential question.

It will be on this point, and on the question of the nomination of pastors, that as a system the Free Church will be broken. Its "Constitution" will remain as a memorial of the powerless-ness of man to constitute by human means that which is only of God. That which proceeds from faith on the part of the individuals who have taken part in it, whatever there is of conscience (and there is this), will remain as a precious proof of the goodness and patience of God.

I should not have deemed it necessary to pass this work in review, if I had only had in view the Free Church of the Canton de Vaud. The work of God in that country will bear its fruit, according to the measure of the power which acts in it. If there is found there a testimony superior to that of the Free Church, accompanied by a power which God can put honour upon, this testimony

will attract those who are truly spiritual. If there be not, the Free Church will pursue its course and will take the form which will result not from its “Constitution,” but from the elements of life, of good or of evil existing in the midst of the assemblies that compose it. The “Constitution” is neither the expression nor the form of the efficacious principle which has brought this work into existence. It is the form which the clergy have wished to give it, and that will not last. I speak of it because elsewhere people are deluding themselves with the hope that a similar clerical movement will bring in a deliverance that they are waiting for.

This is not faith. Let those who have faith take it as a warning and cling afresh to the truth. They will please God so far as faith acts in them and they act by faith, according to the conscience which they have as to things, according to the light that God has set in their consciences His word understood by faith. One has only to follow the word of God. Is one alone in following it? That is so much the more honourable, as demanding all the more faith. Seen from outside, the path of faith appears very painful; it is, for every one who walks in it, full of sweetness and peace. The mountains, on which God communed with Abraham and Abraham with God, were the object of terror to Lot. He thought he should perish there; Gen. 19:19.

Fourth Part Refutation of the Reproaches of the Journal, the “Reformation,” on the subject of Human Order and Evangelical Liberty.

Chapter 1 Ecclesiastical Radicalism.

We have already seen some citations from the Journal the “Reformation,” proving the state of opinion on ministry among those who still support the clergy. I shall now give, on the question of worship, other extracts from this journal, which I give, not as a recognized authority, but as ideas which are current and shew certain sides of the phase through which the Church of God is now passing. We shall see also what is lacking, what the children of God ought to desire, and desire ardently in these times, as well as the rocks they have to avoid. I read in the “Reformation” of April 8th, 1847: “To our mind, spiritual and true worship consists essentially, not in the preaching of Protestants, nor in the false sacrifices of Papists, but in the singing of praise to God by the whole assembly, in the celebration of the Lord’s supper taken in common, in prayer offered by several in the name of all, in the reading of the Bible on the part of such as know how to read, and in words of exhortation offered by whoever feels himself able to exhort bis brethren. Along with this, there will be preachings and teachings, of which teachers will have the responsibility.”

I have no objection to make to the details given by the “Reformation” as to what ought to be done; but there is entirely wanting to them a principle, that of the action of the Holy Spirit, whether as a power, the source of the activity of man and acting to produce this activity; or as discernment as to that activity and as power for

discipline with regard to it. The form is good—God is not presented as being the power of it.

I could not admit that “whoever feels himself able to exhort” has the right to do so, unless two things be added: on the one hand, the responsibility of the one who exhorts to know that he is led of the Holy Spirit; on the other hand, the discernment by spiritual men of this action of the Holy Spirit, or it may be of the absence of it, and the discipline which flows from it, if there be occasion for it. It is God whom I seek in the assembly.

Such a system of worship, proposed in such a journal as the “Reformation,” ought, at least, to strike every attentive reader. All that I ask is, that persons should act thus, depending upon the help of God.

Here is, on the other hand, the description given by the same journal of the services of the churches. I beg the reader to bear in mind that it is not I who speak.

“The bells are rung; the church is filled. During this time, a chapter of the Bible has been read; next, the ten commandments; but few persons have been listening. To this reading succeeds that of a liturgy, which many have followed with their lips, and to which, perhaps, no one has really added his Amen. A sermon is heard which people agree to find admirable, but that is all. Three verses of Psalms have been twice sung, to which the organ alone has imparted any feeling, and people leave, saying they have been worshipping God, and worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. But, no; we must be just. Language is here less false than facts. They say they have been to sermon. Every one seems to acknowledge that it was not worship.”

And, again:

“More guilty, perhaps, and not less absurd, the greater number of protestant churches, with their inevitable men in black, their imposed liturgies, and their everlasting sermons, boast of having replaced forms by the Spirit, while they have substituted for forms, which at least act on the imagination, and sometimes on the heart, a withering and lifeless formalism. People begin to understand the error of the clerical system. The Church is no longer the body of pastors; it is the body of the faithful, it is the christian people. There is in this a great revolution.”

Let us also hear M. Napoleon Roussel, in a postscript, on “Sunday Worship.”

“I confine myself then to saying here that the sermon is as heavy as false, as dull as the black gown with which people dress themselves out to preach it; that it ought, in short, to be given up, in order to speak, in a style intelligible to all the world, things not only fundamentally true, but true in the means which serve to establish them. I would that people mounted the pulpit, not to set themselves up above the audience, but solely in order to be better heard by it… I would… alas! many other things, which neither I, nor others, do.”40 I prefer simply to pursue good and to link myself with the power which alone can produce it, by walking in peace with the word of God as a guide, rather than to publish journalistic articles intended to point out evil. But, indeed, when journals and men of influence in the evangelical world hold such language, an immense revolution is accomplished. It is not that all accept these thoughts, nor that all have definitely stated them; but the movement of which they are the expression exists in persons’ ideas. The germ of them is in people’s minds,

and is being there developed; if not, such language would not be heard. The journals only verify certain moral facts, state them precisely, and by publicity lend them force, importance, and give them a general circulation.

“At the present day,” adds the “Reformation,” the people of the Church have attained the consciousness of their rights. They are no longer willing that the pastor should be outside or above his flock, but one of its members. They renounce divine right, apostolical succession. They substitute popular election to the election of the clergy by the clergy.”

However much the writings above cited may reproduce facts more or less established, could I be pleased with the tone of them? I am very far from it. If I cite them, it is not only to shew the state of opinion in the class to which these writers belong, but also to put brethren on their guard against such thoughts and such language. Even though it were true, it is a human way of speaking, which only tends to replace man by man; that is to say, clerical man by radical man armed with the consciousness of his rights.

Faith does nothing of the kind. It judges the pretensions of the clergy because they are not according to God. It does not own them. It owns a divine right and never gives it up. It owns that this divine right is the only one which can exist, and that the Christian’s part is to have the enjoyment of and to submit to it. The divine right is the joy of the heart which loves God and knows He is grace. Faith has rights in the presence of God, the right of owning that all belongs to Him, that every excellent gift comes from Him. The right of man is death and

condemnation. If he desires blessing, it is in the divine right, as well with regard to ministry as to everything else. No blessing elsewhere, absolutely none. Let us proclaim it loudly, my brethren, let us always remember it. If people come and speak to you of your rights, do not listen to this language. The flesh can thus readily be flattered; but you, Christians, who know that all is grace, you know that it does not belong to you to speak of rights; that the sinner has only one—that of being lost; that the saint owns that all right resides in God; that the rights of man and election by man never puts us in possession either of salvation or of any blessing whatever.

The Holy Spirit, the thought of the Holy Spirit, does not appear in that which we have above transcribed. If it were said that the Holy Spirit is in the Church; that consequently He acts not only in the clergy, but in the body of the faithful, as well for what concerns the action of this body as in the ministration of each member, according to that which God sees good to confer, this would make itself understood by a serious man established in grace; but, that which manifests itself in the fragments above quoted is radicalism in the Church. The rights of man, the rights of the masses, popular election to the exclusion of the divine right, is the very definition of modern radicalism. Ministry in its least gifts is but the expression of the energy of the Holy Ghost acting in us, energy given by God, from whom comes every good gift and every perfect gift.

This brings me to two other points which I shall again present in the very terms of the “Reformation.”

Chapter 2 Dualism.

I read in the “Reformation” of January 28th, 1849: Everything in Plymouthism may be reduced to two points— the idea of the action of the Holy Spirit and the idea of the authority of the scriptures.

Plymouthism wishes to substitute for human organization the action of the Spirit. This is the reason for their principal objection to ecclesiastical ministry.

Next, remarking on the following words of Mr. Recordon, “God only blesses the labours of the workmen; He is sovereign and He acts in grace by the instruments which it pleases Him to choose” (words that accompany a reproach addressed to the faculties of theology which venture to call, to choose, to designate, to send, to displace at their pleasure, the Lord’s workman), the “Reformation” thus expresses itself:

“We see how it is: it is always a dualism set up between the action of God and means, between the Spirit and man, as if the divine work could be accomplished otherwise than in and by man.”

The “Reformation” says again, under date of the 29th November, 1846:

“The religion and ecclesiastical system, which is set forth by Mr. Vermont, rests, it seems to us, on two principles: the authority of the Bible and the aid of the Holy Spirit. It is not, of course, against those two principles, considered in themselves, that we desire to protest, but against the use made of them. Thus the action of the Holy Spirit is taken in the point of view of a gross supranaturalism. The divine action is not conceived of in its dynamic harmony with human action,

but rather as a purely objective and constantly miraculous power. It seems that God is to intervene in a way which excludes man; and that where calculation, the use of means, and well considered activity, come in, the Holy Spirit can find no place. The expectation of the faithful is to be entirely passive. It must await the unfolding of divine graces and abstain from action as much as possible, so as to leave them more liberty. In a word, spiritual graces are always brought back to the supernatural form they assumed in the apostolic age."

Alas! there is in this way of thinking and this way of speaking of the presence of God, and of the action of His Spirit, a lightness, a spirit of jesting, and a tone of petty philosophy, on the subject of holy things, extremely painful to those who feel how serious a thing it is to put oneself forward, to have to do with that which is so precious to Christ as His Church, and how solemn a thing to call oneself a workman together with God, to occupy ourselves with His work, and to say that He acts in us.

As we shall see, the author of these articles has, moreover, entirely misplaced the question.

He is not mistaken in presenting, as the foundations of what people are pleased to call Plymouthism, the authority of the scriptures and the action of the Holy Ghost. It is on these, in very truth, that I desire that my own work and that of my brethren should rest.

What is this dualism between God and man, this singular rivalry of which we are said to be guilty? A rivalry singular truly, on the part of a wretched creature, a worm, with Him who has created man. Such a thought

enters not, either to affirm or deny it, the mind of one who knows what God is and what man.

But the author of these articles is mistaken in every respect. In order to get rid of the action of the Holy Spirit, such as he finds it put forward as one of our fundamental principles, he falls into a strange excess. According to our views, as he affirms, “spiritual graces are always brought back to the supernatural form which they assumed in the apostolic age”; and he had before affirmed with no less assurance that, according to our views, “the action of the Holy Spirit is understood in the sense of a tolerably gross supranaturalism.” The heart revolts in copying it. Does there really exist such a contempt for the action of the Holy Spirit? Alas! that at least betrays the thought of the author. He wants man to appear, man to act. The action and manifestation of the Spirit is for him a gross idea.

And again, the author is mistaken as to the facts of the apostolic age and as to the principles he condemns. The form which the work of the apostolic age assumed did not tend, in general, to a dualism of any kind—very far from it. There was, in certain cases, a sort of dualism. For example, tongues were spoken, and the one who spoke them did not always understand what he said. When that was the case, the apostle declares that this action of the Holy Ghost was of a lower order; “for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret; that the church may receive edifying.” “He that speaketh in an unknown tongue, speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him, howbeit in the Spirit he speaketh mysteries. … He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth

the church … wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue, pray that he may interpret… But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church," 1 Cor. 14:5, 2-4, 13, 28. And Paul adds, as to himself (v. 19), "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." He will have, in speaking, his intelligence to have some part, not as if to produce in any sort another source of truth, but as a vessel blessed for himself and for others with what the grace of God communicated. By this means, there was blessing for himself and communion with others. The power of God by itself was something, no doubt; but the edification of the Church was the object which the love of God proposed to itself. The heart entered into it, spiritual intelligence submitted to it and rejoiced in it. It is thus that, in promising the gift of the Spirit, the Lord Himself says, of the one who should receive it, that "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38); out of his belly, that is to say, from his innermost affections, according to the well known use of this expression in the scriptures.

This dualism, of which the "Reformation" accuses us, is so little in my thought, that, on the contrary, in my eyes, it is precisely, save in the case we have just seen, the absence of it which distinguishes (a general, but not absolute distinction) the revelations of the New Testament from those of the Old. As a general rule, there was, in the prophets of old, this separation between the intelligence of man and the communication of the Spirit. It is otherwise in the revelations of the New Testament. The prophets, serving as channels of the Spirit of God, said, "Thus saith the Lord." Their

hearts felt morally the state of the people, but the prophetic answer of God was communicated without the full intelligence of the prophet. This is why we find in the New Testament, that they “searched diligently … what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow: unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,” 1 Pet. 1:11, 12.

Thus, the ancient prophets themselves studied their prophecies; and there was a further action of the Holy Spirit to make them understand the meaning of them. They then found that it was not for themselves, but for us, that they ministered these things.

We, on the contrary, know that these things are ours. Christ, this precious Saviour, has accomplished the work of eternal redemption. He has entered into His glory at the right hand of God, and the Holy Ghost has come down to be the revealer of this glory of the man Christ, the revealer of the Father’s love, the seal of God upon us, as upon those who are to participate in it, and the earnest of all these blessings in our hearts: for the Head is there, and we are united to that Head; and the Spirit, come down from Him and from the Father, is in us a divine link with Christ. This Spirit, acting in the realization of the relationship of Christ to the Church,41 can reveal nothing to us which is not ours. The understanding rejoices in it. The affections of the heart attach themselves to it. There is a difference of gifts, no doubt, according to the sovereignty and wisdom of God,

in order to communicate to the rest that which He has made us understand; but there is nothing to understand and to communicate but that which, by the same Spirit who renders us capable of it, we know also belongs to us. These rivers of living water flow from the heart which rejoices in the grace and the glory of which He has given us to partake, and from its communion with the Lord who has loved it.

Throughout their whole extent, then, my thoughts (and I doubt not they are, in substance, given by my God) are precisely the contrary of the dualism in question.

But there is still something to add here upon the difference people wish to make between the past and present.

At the beginning of the Church there was not only the action of the Holy Ghost, but, besides this, new revelations. Now, in the communication of these divine truths for the Church of that age and of all ages, God preserved the mouth of those whom He employed for this work, so that no error should fall from it, where He saw good to give that which was to serve as an authority. It is not that this took away spiritual intelligence from the others. Even when an apostle spoke, they searched the word to see “whether these things were so,” Acts 17:11. If prophets addressed the assembly, the rest judged; 1 Cor. 14:29. There were, however, divine revelations entrusted to those who were chosen of God to be the vessel of those revelations and organs of communicating them. Perhaps some of these communications were only for the moment; but those which were for every age of the Church are preserved for us in the written word. It is true also that, at that

time, one was called upon to study that which the word of God reveals, so that one's profiting might be known to the whole Church; 1 Tim. 4:13-16.

Where is dualism, save in the mind of the author, who, as regards the apostolic age, makes everything proceed from the Spirit outside the intelligence of man, and, at the present time, makes everything be derived from man without the Spirit?

In order that there may be any good, it is needful for the Spirit of God to act in man and enable him to receive, communicate, understand, either a revelation,42 or even spiritual communications of things already revealed in the word. Blessing cannot come from man; man receives it by the Spirit. He has, in order to communicate it, neither wisdom, nor power, nor direction, save by the Holy Spirit. If he acts from himself, he abandons his christian position before God. As to one who listens to him, he understands by the Spirit, and the thing is applied to his soul by the Holy Spirit alone. I do not deny that the soul and understanding of the one who speaks are the vessel of this action, this power. I know they are; that the soul, the conscience, the understanding of him who listens are so likewise; but I say that it is the Holy Ghost who acts, if there is blessing, and wherever there is.

If then any one objects, and says, No; it is he who introduces dualism; it is he who separates man from the Holy Ghost. That is indeed the dualism of incredulity, which makes of man a being capable of acting in the things of God without God's being with him, or acting in him. It is rationalism.

The movement is impressed on man and effectuated in man; but it comes from God: if not, it is evil. This is a point as capital as it is elementary. And, whatever may be the contempt with which the journalist treats these things, and accuses this system of meaning that the faithful should abstain from action as much as possible and take a more passive position, I boldly avow that I desire for all my brethren, as also for myself, that we should feel even more and more our entire dependence on God; that it is the Spirit which quickeneth and that the flesh profiteth nothing; yes, that we should feel our constant dependence, and that, if the Spirit does not lead us, we should not pretend, either in a smaller or a greater way, to meddle with the things of God. I believe, then, that the Spirit of God acts in man and by man, and in particular by the members of the body of Christ. He gives understanding, power, and energy. He is a Spirit of power and of liberty! But if He thus acts, His grace produces in the heart of man a spirit of humility and of entire dependence on God, a spirit which would be unwilling even to do a miracle if one could, unless the express will of God led one to do it. The life of the new man lives by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, and does not dare to act out of dependence on Him. That the Spirit should act in man and not outside man (an idea foreign to any system whatever), this is not, whatever may be said, what is intended.

What is intended is as follows: It is intended that people should calculate, reflect, employ means, arrange forms, without the Spirit and without the Bible, as we shall see; it is intended that all this should be done according to “human order,” that is to say, of people’s own will, yes,

without the action of the Holy Spirit, without the direction of the Bible, which, say they, furnishes no rules as to church matters. And then, after all that, when man has acted without God, after his own counsels, people flatter themselves that God will put His hand to it. “I know,” says the author, “that the Spirit of God can manifest His power, not only in spite of diverse forms, but even in these forms.” That is to say, man will act alone, without the Spirit of God, without any direction from the Bible; then, God may come in and act, if He will.

I believe that in all systems, or rather, in spite of all systems, where there is faith, God will be found. But what a strange piety, to arrange things in the first place in one’s own way, then to leave God to come in later, if He sees good! It is just man who wants to have man and the commandments of man.

As for me, I do not seek for “miracles”; but I do desire true dependence on God. I desire that man should not act without Him; that the presence of God in the midst of our assemblies should be our power and our blessing. Does the author of the article want God not to be present? Or does he want man to act without Him in His presence?

I have said that people wish to act without any direction from the Bible. They wish, in fact, as to all that concerns the Church, to set aside the Bible, as well as the Holy Spirit. Now, I say that man has nothing to do in the things of God without the Bible—that he has not to act without the Bible any more than without the Holy Ghost.

This is the second point I desire to treat.

Chapter 3 The Gospel Code.

To take the impulse of the Spirit without the word, is to expose oneself to take the flights of the imagination for a spiritual impulse.

To take the Bible without the Spirit, is to raise man to the level of God as to his capacity, and to make man do without God in his heart. It is rationalism.

To take the Spirit without the Bible, is to give a loose rein to all the follies of the human imagination, and to cover these extravagances with the name of God.

To do without the Spirit and the Bible, is what was reserved for the adversaries of the spiritual energy, which, in our days, is manifesting itself in the Church.

Is that true? the astonished reader asks. You shall see.

The word of scorn, which, in order to shake, to weaken, to crush their faith, is flung at those who, taking the Bible as their rule, do not venture to act without its directions in the most precious and important things of God—this word by which it is thought to fix on them the stamp of error or of ridicule, is ‘gospel-code’ (l’Evangile-code). We are accused of making a code of the gospel.

In one sense, I do not make one; in another, the Bible is my rule in every particular; and, without it, I dare do nothing in the things of God. I know that the letter killeth and that the Spirit giveth life. I do not take the Bible, without the Holy Ghost, as a literal code.

If the Bible tells me to love my brother, I shall find a thousand things in which love will be shewn, and of which the Bible does not speak, although, even in those things, I am directed by other instructions of the word. In many things, in which we have our senses exercised

to discern good and evil, the word leaves liberty in order to put love to the proof. By our conduct in these things, it will judge, by the help of other passages, the thoughts and intents of the heart. The directions of the Bible suppose neither the imperfection which leaves man to himself in any particular whatever, nor a code which ties him to ceremonies and makes all his conduct a ceremony. And the Bible supposes neither the one nor the other, because the Spirit acts in a being become spiritual, who is to be directed by his affections and his conscience, but according to the word and according to the example of Christ; in a spiritual being who ought never to act of his own will (for that is what Christ never did, and what the word never allows).

To suppose that one must have either a code, or the calculation and will of man; to suppose that there is a category of things among the most important things, which most nearly concern God, in which man is to act at his pleasure, without the directions of God, is to shew an entire ignorance of what is spiritual life and christian obedience. I should like to hear the author explain what is meant by the perfect law of liberty.

Ignorant and weak as I am (and I feel it), I venture to tell him that the more prpgress he makes in spiritual life, in the knowledge of the Bible and the knowledge of the Lord, the more also will he find that the word of God applies to everything in which man is found in relation with God, and withdraws him from everything in which he is out of relation with God, that it produces this effect not as a code, but as light and life, as direction which the Christian will understand by spiritual intelligence, by the mighty grace of the Holy Spirit; light, life, direction, in which he will seize the thoughts and

wisdom of God, in which he will seize what is the will of God (and that is what constitutes his joy); when, in fine, he will find all the thoughts and intents of his own heart judged by this word which penetrates to the joints and marrow, to the soul and spirit.

Does the author think that the things relating to the Church, be they what they may, are not included among the relations between God and man? If they are included, if they have a place among them, the word will in them reveal God and judge man. It is in them that God and man are brought into the closest contact, that God will have nothing but what is of Himself, that He abhors the commandments and ordinances of man. He Himself is there. The Church is builded together to be the habitation of God by the Spirit. And, as to particular assemblies, where two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus, He is in their midst.

And the Bible gives us no direction as to these things! What then can the calculation and reflection of a journal be worth, with regard to those in whose midst the Lord is found?

When the existence of a Church, the body of Christ on earth, is denied, when what that Church is, is ignored, and every divine idea discarded, the Spirit and the word may easily enough be set aside. Indeed, in a system founded on such principles, the word and the Spirit would have nothing to do, unless to judge everything. And, if a system is to be established according to the wisdom of man, I undertake to demonstrate that, whatever it may be, it contradicts, in every way, the word of God: so little is it true that the word of God is silent as to all these things. If persons presume to say,

that when the word of God has said one thing, we may just as well do another thing, we shall at least know what is the question at issue.

Let me quote the text which has given rise to all I have just been saying.

“The second principle of Plymouthism is its notion concerning the Holy Scriptures. We do not here speak of the inspiration or authority of the books of the Bible, but rather of the use that Plymouthism makes of this doctrine, that the New Testament is the word of God. It concludes from it that everything found there is to be a law.43 In vain is it alleged that the New Testament itself does not at all state this claim; that nowhere have the apostles given us their conduct in the direction of the Church, as a model which it was necessary to follow; that not one passage expresses the obligation of Christians to regard the ecclesiastical institutions of the first age as an absolute standard. … It must not be thought that the idea of the gospel-code is a Christian axiom, which can always be made our starting-point, and which one has never the need of examining.”

And farther on, “We also, we have long thought that, on the ground of conformity to primitive usages, there is no successful defence of present usages. We must boldly place ourselves on that of evangelical liberty and human order. We have already said that there is the whole question” (The “Reformation,” of January 28th, 1847).

Yes, in truth, there is the question. If we add the denial of the presence and action of the Holy Ghost, there is all the question.

Happy and bold emancipation from the Bible and from the restraint of the presence of God! Can one imagine

anything setting aside more boldly the word of God, in all that relates to the Church?

As a general rule, it is wished that we should not seek in the word directions for the Church; and, as it must be confessed that there are many in it, it is said that those which are found there are not to be made a law of. That a Christian is saved, if you will, he may learn from the word; but as to directions for the Church on earth, it is insisted that the Bible furnishes us none. It cannot be denied that there are some in it; but we must take care not to see in them a law, and make use of evangelical liberty, and that boldly. The Spirit of God has not put them in the word in order that we might observe them. Would it be believed that it is come to this?

It is admitted that the present usages could not be justified by the Bible. Let us take note of this. And as people are not bound to follow the Bible, as everything that is found in the New Testament is not to be made a law, are directions to be entirely dispensed with? No. People are to use their liberty; they are to abandon what is found in the New Testament, since it condemns present usages, and they will betake themselves to human order; that is to say, they will fashion things according to their own will. They do not mean to say by this, that there are things which, because of our weakness, we cannot do; which we do not deny, and for which we humble ourselves. No; they want quite another principle, namely, to put aside the Bible and to follow human order.

If this is the principle which is opposed to what is called Plymouthism, while this decried Plymouthism recognizes the presence of the Spirit of God as a Spirit of union,

power, and order, and recognizes the word of God, understood by the help of that Spirit, as a sufficient rule given by God for every case, and notably to. lead ardent affections and subject consciences in a path pleasing to God, in the midst of the Church which that Spirit has gathered in its unity, in order to be the faithful spouse of Christ—all that is done, in throwing discredit on our views by the name of Plymouthism, is to cover us, in the eyes of simple souls, with a nickname given by the enemy to Christian faithfulness and obedience to the authority of God's word. Let people say what they will, provided that, for my part, I may realize that which they reject.

Let us again cite the "Reformation" of October 29th, 1846.

"This brings us to the other fundamental error of Plymouthism; we mean the use it makes of the word of God. The evangelical principle, that of the Reformation, is the exclusive authority of the holy scriptures, and consequently, the assertion that those scriptures are fully sufficient. At the same time it is taken for granted that, by this, the churches of the Reformation mean an authority in that sphere of things of which the Bible speaks,44 a sufficient light in those questions which tend to salvation. It has never otherwise been understood or explained… But … the sixteenth century itself was not always consistent.

"Scripture is sufficient for all that which pertains to salvation. Such is the Protestant maxim.

"But to appeal, in ecclesiastical questions, to the authority of scripture, to expect from scripture light upon these questions in the name of its dignity as the

sole rule for Christians, is to comprise matters of form and organization among things necessary for salvation. 45 Now, is not this the Catholic principle? Outside the Church, that is, of a particular form of the Church, no salvation? These so deeply anti-evangelical notions are much more widely spread than is generally believed."

The attention of Christians cannot be too much drawn to the slippery nature of the ground on which they have been set by the existing systems and by those who seek either to preserve them or modify them by introducing new life into them. It is impossible to maintain their systems, if the authority of the Bible be maintained. And hence the Bible is set aside to admit these systems or to keep them. Catholicism, to which people would assimilate us, does not seek its constitution in the Bible. It makes the Bible depend on the authority of the Church,; that is to say, it takes away from God the right of Himself addressing the conscience and making man directly responsible for what he has heard, and it practically declares that what God has said and done in this respect is defective. For the Catholic, the Church and her forms precede the Bible, which he receives from the hands of the Church. For the Catholic, the forms must not be judged by the Bible, which is precisely the principle of our adversaries. There is, however, between the Catholics and them this difference: the Catholics call their system the divine order, respecting God in name; our adversaries call their's human order, having no other principle than their own will.

Here again, it is a question not of any form but of the power on which what is legitimate in this respect depends, and of the rule which is to direct the action and the effects of this power, so that we should not stray

from it. We say, Christ is Son over His own house; the Holy Ghost is the One who acts in the Church to produce therein, by His divine presence, the order, liberty, and blessing which become the house of God's Son. And where the Spirit is, there is liberty.

Nevertheless, man, not inspired, cannot be trusted as the vessel of the thoughts of the Spirit; and God, in His grace, has taken the pains to give us written directions, enlightenment, warnings, for which we bless Him from the bottom of our hearts, while at the same time distrusting ourselves. We believe His word perfect with the instruction of His Spirit. We believe it to contain everything a Christian needs, and that according to the order and importance of the subject, according to His perfect grace, acting in respect of the wants of man; for eternal things, eternal truths; for the means to be employed, directions which are suitable to an inferior order of things, but which describe the existence on earth of what on earth is most precious to God. It is neither a law, nor a code, because man would not be capable of making use of it, and because God is not willing (and it is in grace that He is not willing) to expose us to the risk of departing either from continual dependence on Him, or from living relations with a Being, a living God. This God, infinite in His wisdom, has known how to give that which perfectly directs, in dependence on Himself, the spiritual man who, having the Spirit of the Lord, can understand the thought and will of that Spirit. He has known how to accommodate His written instructions to His own perfections and to man who has the Spirit; for he judgeth all things (1 Cor. 2:15, 16),46 so that for him,47 these instructions are perfect, complete, and divine; and because they are

divine, they are beyond the reach of the natural man who would never profit by them through seeking a code in them, however truly they may comprehend everything which, at all times, governs the relations between God and man. But these relations are foreign to the natural man.

Besides, the instructions given to the Church, as well as those given to the Christian for his individual walk, are moral instructions for moral circumstances. They have not ceremonies in view and cannot be a code. In such or such an act of the Church, a thousand moral principles may exercise their influence; and, on the other hand, a thousand hearts and a thousand consciences will have to submit to them. Now these moral principles are in the Bible. In certain cases, the word being positive, the will of man has nothing to do but to submit. In others, with the intention that the heart should be exercised and faith put to the test, it only gives directions designed to act on the heart and on faith, and moreover perfectly sufficient to produce their effect in the case of those whose heart acts according to that which is said; for God, the living God, is ever there. It is this last truth which changes everything, and it is this which is entirely forgotten by the class of Christians to whom we are now replying.

But, the rules given for individual conduct are quite as much moral as those given for the Church. They nevertheless do not form a code. Sometimes there are rules and relations exact and positive; sometimes, principles; a code, never. If we read, for example, “Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also,” this directs us personally and profoundly. The Lord, notwithstanding, did not do this:

He answered peaceably. There is not a code which, by literal directions, decides every case which presents itself. Does then the word of God not furnish us with sufficient directions for practical walk? It is sufficient for salvation to believe that Jesus is the Christ; at all events, the one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.

Finally, the truth of the matter is this: “When thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light. … If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light,” Luke 11:34-36. It is not the will of God that it should be otherwise. Now there is not in the Bible anything save what is necessary, when the case to which it applies presents itself. Man lives by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God; and, if the word of God is not sufficient for every circumstance, and on every occasion, man, deprived of the wisdom of God, will stray in the desert wastes into which Satan and his own will will have led him.

Chapter 4 On the Administration of the Church.

As to what concerns the administration of the Church, the great principles which are found in the word of God are the following.

For the calling, and for the spiritual wants of this Church, God has given certain gifts which act for the increase and the union of the body at all times. Forms have no place whatever. Order is always morally the will of God; now the word provides for it where it is needed (1 Cor. 14; Rom. 12; 1 Pet. 4.) Through the corruption of man, the Church may be found in a state of dilapidation;

but, if this be so, the word of God suffices in this case also to the spiritual man, to enable him to judge of it and to direct him in the circumstances in which he finds himself.

This is what our opponents deny. They say that at the beginning God gave rules and forms needful for the walk of the Church, but that these forms do not concern us.

They were, we must surely suppose, in that case, as necessary as they were good in those days, since God gave them by inspiration; but at the present day, although He had shewn the necessity for such directions, God has abandoned His Church without leaving it any for its walk.

Let us then examine the positive testimony of scripture on this subject.

The word of God presents to us a Church formed on earth48 by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven when the Son of God took His seat there in glory, having accomplished the work of redemption. This Church is one with its Head. It is the body of which Christ, ascended to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, is the Head; Eph. 1:20-23.

This precious redemption has brought about the establishment of man in this glory in heaven, the manifestation of this glory, such as it is in Jesus, and the participation of poor sinners even in this glory.

In the name of Him who has accomplished redemption, and who is seated in the glory, the Spirit, come down as witness of these things, has called sinners to come out of the world which had rejected Him, and to enjoy the infinite grace which had thus called them according to

the counsels of God and washed them in the blood of Him whom the world had crucified. This same Spirit (who, by means of those whom God had chosen, had thus called sinners, and had communicated life to them) has also united them in one body, of which this glorified Christ is the Head, of which the Spirit Himself is the link with Christ, and in which He is the link between the members, one with the other. But this link is a living and powerful link, and He acts by a divine operation in the members. The members individually and the body49 collectively are His temple.

The word shews that this is the basis and source of all true ministry.

Ministry is thus linked with the existence of the Church of God and the love of Christ for this body which He nourishes and cherishes as His own flesh. By his unfaithfulness, man has been able to spoil the development of this ministry and of the life of the Church down here, as well as the development of the life in the individual; but the existence of ministry is connected with the very existence of the Church, and the faithfulness of the Head with whom it is united.

Consequently, to affirm that the teaching of the apostles on the subject of ministry and its action does not apply to later ages, is to say that there is no longer either a body of Christ, or faithfulness in its Head to nourish it. That is impossible. Moreover the Comforter will abide with us for ever.

Many things, indeed, are lost. Tongues are no longer spoken, miracles are no longer performed. That which was connected with the external testimony and established the authority of the word is no longer found

in the present day; but that which is of the substance of the things, that is to say ministry which calls and which nourishes, exists at all times, 1 Corinthians 4 and 14; Romans 12; and 1 Peter 4:10,11, contain instructions the force of which will subsist as long as the Church shall be on earth. One ought to take account of other passages which reveal to the heart and conscience our actual position before God, and which, in various respects, modify the application of those I have named; but until we are come to the measure of the stature of Christ, He will nourish the Church for its increase, and the Church will make increase of itself by this means.

Now, it is this ministry, its action, the rules which apply to it, that are in question. As to organization, we are but little reproached with too much insisting upon it.

To my mind, it is evident that the coming of Christ was before the eyes of the apostles; and this, whilst at the same time caring for the Church in an indefatigable manner, and making provision that such care should not fail it. But the apostles could not cause that the power—and there was power—of their ministry should continue after their death. See what Paul says to the Ephesians (Acts 20:22-30), and what Peter teaches; 1 Peter 1:14, 15. Now, the kingdom of God is in power. The power of the ministry of the apostles has disappeared, and the consequence has gradually been the corruption of the Church and frightful disorder; so that one has seen what was called order and holy orders become the seat of the enemy’s power, and what called itself the Church to be that which truth had to combat.

Now, in the perilous times of the last days, when there should be the form of godliness and its power denied, to

what does the apostle (in view of everything- which, before his prophetic eyes was springing up in the Church) direct his beloved Timothy, his son in the faith, this devoted heart into which he was pouring out his own? Here is the language he holds to him, “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them… All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” Now, it is very certain that this goes much farther than direction for the walk of the Church, that it embraces everything. The man of God is not simply a Christian; he is a man acting in the work and Church of” God. This was the case with Timothy, to whom the epistle is addressed, and to whom Paul says, “Thou, O man of God,” 1 Tim. 6:11. He needed to know how he ought to behave himself in the house of God; 1 Tim. 3:15.

Now for these times, after the departure of the apostle (times in which his immediate care would be wanting to the Church, and evil would go on increasing), to what does the apostle direct the faith of the man of God? Precisely to divinely inspired scripture, to that which we are told not to make a law of, to that which, if it must be said, is derided as a code, to what Timothy had learned from him (and where shall we learn from him, if not in the written word?); to the scriptures in fine, that he might be perfect and furnished unto every good work. Now I think that the work of the ministry and the care of the Church are a good work; at all events the apostle expressly says so to Timothy; 1 Tim. 3:1.

So likewise it is to God and to the word of His grace, that, in similar circumstances, the apostle commends the elders of Ephesus; Acts 20:29-32. All this relates to the administration of the Church.

If, then, we cannot do certain things, it is not that the authority of the word is wanting to us as to these things, nor that it is not our blessing to possess these precious directions in which God has shewn us that He has thought of the least wants of His Church; but we acknowledge our weakness; and we do not pretend to do what God has not committed to us. Thus, for example, I do not pretend to name either elders or deacons. If others pretend to have the spiritual discernment and the authority necessary for this, let them do it; but of this I have not discerned the proofs—very far from it. More than this: he who should make such a pretension seems to me not to understand at all either the state of the Church, or the thoughts of God, to act contrary to the will of God, and to lack precisely that which is necessary in order to direct the Church, namely, intelligence of the thoughts of God. Do I despise the functions of elders and deacons? Do I love disorder? Far from it. And if I do not pretend to establish anyone in these offices, I own (blessing God with all my heart for it) the qualities requisite for them, when they are manifested. I lend them all the moral support which spiritual respect with regard to what God has given them can afford, and I associate myself with them as far as it belongs to me to do so. And the word furnishes me with directions on this subject. It calls on me to own those who labour, those who give themselves to the ministry (diaconate) of the saints and to submit myself to them; 1 Thess. 5:12, 13; 1 Cor. 16:15; Heb. 13:7-17; 1 Peter 5:2-6. I do not treat

this subject at length, but only in its relation to the authority of the word, while blessing God in that itself furnishes the answer to all its adversaries, from whatever quarter they may arise.

Conclusion

You, Christians, who take the word for your guide, for counsel, who find in it a precious gift which God has bestowed on us and a perfect light in every case, do not be discouraged. If you meet with opposition, and if the number of those who are willing to follow this way is small, be not astonished. “All men have not faith,” 2 Thess. 3:2.

And where there is faith, how many things, alas! tend to obscure spiritual life, to hinder the eye from being single, to cause us to say: “Let me first go,” etc. (Luke 9:59).

But faith is always blessed. The single eye always enjoys the sweet and precious light of God. The word suffices to make every man perfect; and, if distinctions be wished, it suffices not only to save him, it suffices also to make him wise unto salvation, and, further, to make him perfect and throughly furnished unto all good works.

Whoever you may be, dear and well-beloved brethren, confide in this word. Only remember that, to profit from it, you need the help and teaching of the living God. You can learn from it neither grace nor truth, nor make use of it, unless the Spirit of God instruct you. All the language, all the ideas of faith— of Christian life are found in it; but you have the care of a living and divine Master. This word is the sword of the Spirit.

Whatever may be moreover the forms and ways of piety which are found in them, and the zeal which impels them, you will find that those who oppose a walk which claims the word of God as authority in all things, leave aside or reject and do not understand the following truths:

First, the doctrine of the Church of God, the body of Christ, one upon earth, the bride of the Lamb.

Secondly, the presence and power of the Spirit of God, acting in the children of God and directing them; especially, the presence50 of the Holy Ghost in the body, the Church down here, acting in it and directing it, as well as all its members, in the name of Him who is its Head.

Thirdly, the authority and sufficiency of the word of God.

These Christians evade, on one side or other, the authority of the word of God. They admit it as Protestants, to escape from it as believers, as members of the Church, as disciples; and what they organize in nowise flows from it, as the “Constitution of the Free Church of the Canton de Vaud” has given us a proof.

You will also see that in general, among the Christians of whom we are speaking, the clergy take the place of worship. There is, it is true, some change and some progress in this last respect. The Spirit of God is producing wants; but there will never be a true and blessed answer to these wants, save in admitting with faith the principles called to mind above. For you, dear brethren, who have understood these things, I will add a warning.

One may have this precious knowledge necessary in order to walk intelligently before God (Eph. 5:15); but one may have it, boast of it, proclaim it, and with all this repel humble souls desirous of advancing, and throw them into the hands of those who have no wish that they should walk according to this knowledge. We ourselves must walk in seriousness, in humility, in the love which the presence of God produces. This supposes faith and life in the soul. Where it is found, blessing is not wanting to those who thus walk. Although this does not justify the unbelief or the opposition of others, if you present the truth in such a way as not to glorify God, you give them power and influence against it. Principles are not enough: we need God. Without this, mighty principles are but a sword in the hands of a child or of a drunken man; it were better to take it from him, or at least, that he use it not till he be sober. Let us shew the fruits of our principles. Let us be firm in the truth. We must be firm. The more some oppose the truth, and others profess to wish to possess it, and accommodate themselves, without their conscience unreservedly submitting to it, to the wants it has produced in other persons (and both these cases present themselves), the more we have to keep in the narrow path it has marked out in the word for our souls, according to the grace and power of the Holy Ghost who has sanctified us to obey Christ. Let our hearts be large and our feet in the narrow path. Often, when people talk of charity, their hearts are narrow and their feet are following the path which suits them. It is this which makes the heart narrow, because the conscience is uneasy, and people do not like those who make this evident. The presence of God (and it is of this that we are speaking) gives firmness, practical submission to the word of God

Himself, which tranquillizes the soul in the difficulties of the way, which causes one not to seek the prevalence of principles by crooked ways and human means; finally, it gives humility and uprightness. God will know how to enforce these principles, where He acts in His grace. Only let us manifest this power, He will do all the rest.

Yes, dear brethren, life, the presence of God, this is what (by the operation of the Holy Ghost in us and in others) gives force to the truths which are committed to us, whatever they may be. Better that these truths should not make way, than that we ourselves should get away from the presence of God to enforce them.

The need of unity and of spiritual action is making itself felt. You will see human efforts spring up, intended to produce things which answer to these wants. Do not trust them. The Church, the Spirit, the word, the practical expectation of Christ, these are the things of which you have now to realize the truth and power. While waiting for the coming of Jesus, as the immediate object of the spiritual affections of the heart, here is what we have to occupy ourselves with.

There are systems of every sort, the National, the Free, that of the Evangelical Alliance,51 and others. When the truth is firmly retained, all this is judged in the soul without violence or noise. Nothing of all this can accord with the things I have spoken of: only let us be sure that God will honour personal faith wherever He finds it. Let us thus have hearts large, ready to own God wherever He works; but let us not be deceived by appearances. Neither one nor other of these systems can be the bride of Christ, nor the habitation of the Spirit of which the

word speaks; nor can they act simply according to the word.

Now, dear brethren, God shakes everything except the kingdom which cannot be shaken. He will remove everything save that. Why build that which His coming will destroy? Let us keep ourselves firmly in the word of His patience. He did not possess, He possesses not yet, the fruit of the travail of His soul: all which is not that will perish; let us attach ourselves to that which will not perish. Every other thing will distract us. Impossible for me to enjoy fully the coming of Jesus as a promise, if I am seeking to build the things which His coming will destroy. His Church will be taken up to Him. His Spirit will be for ever its power. His word abides for ever. Let us abide by it. Neither will our labour be lost (1 Cor. 15:30-32), nor the work of faith, although this word be, no doubt, the word of His patience.

How many events since these pages were written have come to give force and reality to the truths revealed as to the Church, the Spirit, the word, and the practical expectation of Christ! How happy to have received in peace, by faith, that which these events give the demonstration of, and which becomes doubly precious in the midst of all that is being unfolded before our eyes! And what a confirmation for faith, to see events confirm, by providential actings, that which, by the teaching of the Spirit, we have believed and received as truths.

And, in presence of these events, how should Christians cherish and realize, more than ever, the coming of the Lord Jesus! It will be the daily joy of our souls and a powerful means of confirming us in peace and in a sure and Christian walk. Let us know how to apply its power

to all our walk. Let us remember that an incorruptible inheritance, undefiled, is reserved in heaven for us who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. And, meanwhile, let us remember that Christ said, “My kingdom is not of this world,” and that we ourselves are not of this world, even as Christ was not of this world. We are dead and risen with Him. Let us apply these testimonies of the word to all our walk, remembering that our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Lord Jesus as Saviour, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. While walking tranquilly with Jesus, the God of peace will be with us. Nothing separates us from His love. He may let us be chastened if need be, but He never abandons the government of all things. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father. The Lord Jesus walks on the rough sea as on the calm: we could not, without Him, walk either on the one or on the other.

Kept in the communion of the Lord, far from diminishing in our hearts the value of the elementary truths of the gospel, the principles I have spoken of make them infinitely more precious, and at the same time much more clear. They will be proclaimed with more power and simplicity.

Thus the coming of Jesus will reanimate our zeal to call those who are His own, to address ourselves to sinners, to warn the world of the judgment which awaits it, and which awaits it such as it is down here; it will impel us, according to our measure, to a holy activity in the Church, to the end that the Church may awake and may prepare itself, as also to a holy activity towards the world.

May God keep us near to Himself, and preserve us, you and myself, my brethren, whoever you are who love the Lord Jesus, in the faithful and patient waiting for Jesus, who has said to us, “Surely, I come quickly!” Amen.

1 The presence of the authority of the Holy Spirit, and, in consequence also, the authority of the gifts He confers, are ignored by our opponents. Priesthood does not confer the right of preaching; it is the gift which imposes this duty on the one who has received it. If, for example, a spiritual capacity for preaching is met with, the Church can neither confer nor take it away. Neither gifts, nor the right to preach, are the portion of all; and it is very wrong to consider the right of preaching as a right of man. It is a duty which flows from a gift, an obligation toward God. Woe to him who does it not, if God has conferred the gift on him. The Church cannot entrust him with that for which God has already made him responsible, nor take it from him; neither can it relieve him from the responsibility which is attached to it. On the other hand, the Church cannot entrust to him that which God has not given him. If he has the talent, the Lord calls him to traffic with this talent; if he has it not, no institution can fit him to do so.

2 “Examination of the Darbyite views on Holy Ministry by passages of Scripture,” by a minister of the Word of God. Neufchatel (Switzerland), 1846.

3 “Examination,” page 18.

4 “Examination,” pages 19-21.

5 In saying “adversaries,” I mean to refer only to views and the position taken with regard to them. I am not the adversary of the persons who have taken this position. The author of an “Examination of the Darbyite Views,” a

pamphlet written in a gentle and amiable spirit, is, to my knowledge, a brother who would not like to be an adversary of the children of God. He has, in general, represented my views with uprightness, with sincerity, and ordinarily with justness. Nevertheless, in the point which constitutes the thesis of the pamphlet, he has made me say precisely the contrary of what I have really said. Preoccupied with his subject (I only attribute this mistake to preoccupation), he has made me, from the distinction established between gifts and local charges, conclude their incompatibility—a conclusion contrary to what I have written, of which he would have done well to take a little more account. The examination which, on this occasion, I have made of my previous publications, has convinced me of the justness of what I said, and has shewn me that God has given me grace to keep, with much more exactness than this brother, within the limits of truth on the subject in question, a subject on which I agree with him. The controversy bears upon the points which he has avoided; among others, that as to whether the Church's fall has not altered the position of the children of God. A system which prefers the Church of Neufchatel to the apostolic times exposes itself to be received with some distrust.

6 These expressions shew how the author of the "Examination" has misunderstood my thought, when he ascribes to me assigning to local charges as their object "employment for temporal uses." While presenting in good faith the general ideas I have put forth on ministry, he has, in treating the point in question, fallen into a preoccupation which has completely hidden from him all I have said, so that, in seeking to oppose me, he maintains what I have myself maintained in the writings

from which he has gathered the exposition of my views. I beg all persons who honestly wish to know what I think, to read what I have written.

7 Expression to which the author several times reverts.

8 For he has recognized the force of a critical observation which is to be found in them as to a Greek phrase.

9 Thus, what the author would call the church of Neufchatel is like a young man at the flower of his age, compared with the apostolic state, which was only the infancy and childhood of the Church of God.

10 “Examination,” page 75.

11 No. of 26th April, 1846.

12 Page 43, etc.

13 “Examination,” page 44.

14 “Examination,” page 41.

15 “Examination,” page 42.

16 “Examination,” page 43.

17 “Examination,” page 39.

18 “Examination,” page 47.

19 “Examination,” page 45.

20 “Examination,” page 51.

21 This is, in fact, just what has happened, since the publication of bis work, in the neighbourhood of the author of the “Examination,” on the part of those who co-operated in drawing it up. I am assured that the author does not approve of this conduct.

22 See the “Constitution of the Free Church of the Canton de Vaud.” Fuller mention will be made of it hereafter.

23 Page 80.

24 This is the case in the country in which the author of the “Examination” lives.

25 “Examination,” pages 64, 65.

26 “Examination,” pages 76.

27 “Examination,” pages 77.

28 The company or corporate bodies of Pastors.

29 “Examination,” page 75.

30 “Examination,” page 75.

31 “Examination,” page 53.

32 “Examination,” page 53.

33 “Examination,” page 78.

34 In the country in which the system defended by the author of the “Examination” reigns, the non-ratification of the baptismal vow, conformably to a non-scriptural catechism, entails the loss of civil rights. And the ecclesiastical chiefs do not fear to employ the civil authority to enforce on the inhabitants the rights of their system. [Since this was written, there has been a revolution, and this is changed.]

35 “Examination,” pages 34-36.

36 See, again, Romans 1:5, where Paul says he received apostleship by Jesus Christ, for obedience to the faith among all nations; and Acts 26:16, 17, where Paul relates the commission he has received from the Lord

Jesus: “For I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee.”

37 Note to translation.—The express word of scripture is, ‘they therefore being sent forth by the Holy Ghost.’

38 For the civil magistrate to govern, is the ordinance of God. The magistrate may abuse his power, no doubt, and man is wicked; but there is a just Judge who knows how to maintain the oppressed, and who, as the apostle tells us, watches over that which He has ordained. The authority is the minister of God for good to those who do well. “Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.” If one is persecuted for the name of Christ, the case is different; it is our glory. But if we do good, the civil power, armed as it is with the authority of God, will not harm us. The Christian submits to the authority with joy, and that for conscience’ sake, having confidence in God. He does it of good will.

As to the clergy, whence does their power come, when they have any? Who would put confidence in it? However, I confess, I have no fear that the Free Church, such as it has manifested itself in these countries, will come to that.

39 Some movements intended to form free churches have taken place in Germany, and some have been formed entirely rationalistic. Their nature and principles are so different that I am not willing either to occupy

myself with them here, nor to confound the course of the Vaudois clergy with that of Uhlich or others similar.

40 I give here, as explaining the motives for many things with which the course of the Brethren, who are called Plymouthists, is reproached, the following fragment of a discourse on 2 Samuel 6:1-12, which is the tenth of M. Napoleon Roussel's discourses on "Sunday Worship."

"Another day, we find an obstacle in our way, when accompanying the holy ark, when conducting a christian work, when labouring in whatever manner for the advancement of the kingdom of God. As it is in acting with uprightness and simplicity that we have been foiled by the malice of men, we almost reproach ourselves for this uprightness and simplicity, and this time we wish to try adroitness and cunning. Under the pretext of making ourselves all things to all men, so as to gain some, we make ourselves all things to all men in such a way as to ruin ourselves with others. Nor is this enough. To gain worldly people, we employ worldly people themselves to draw the gospel chariot. Because such an one is rich, we place him in the front; because such another is clever, we make him a charioteer. We employ the crowd to push behind, and end by being lost in the herd of unbelievers whom we purposed to direct. In the midst of such a retinue, we ourselves lose faith, and we copy those who ought to imitate us. Can we then be astonished, if God allow our work to perish? Is it not more wonderful, that we are still spared by Him who punished Uzzah for bringing an unbelieving arm to the help of the holy ark?"

41 I say, in the relations of Christ with the Church, because, in the Apocalypse given to the Church, the

Spirit again becomes a prophetic Spirit, and speaks in a different manner.

42 1 Corinthians 2:12-15. When I say, a revelation, I speak of the apostolic times. For us, the complete revelation of truth is in the word. If there be a distinctive principle of Christianity, it is that of the presence and action of the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

Luke 24:49. John 4; ch. 7; ch. 14:17-26; ch. 15:26; ch. 16:1-15. Acts 1:8; ch. 2:38, 39; ch. 4:31; ch. 5:3; ch. 8:17; ch. 10:47; ch. 11:15; ch. 13:9; ch. 19:2. Romans 8, almost the entire chapter (compare verse 9 and 7:5). 1 Corinthians 2:9-16; ch. 3:16; ch. 6:19; ch. 12; ch. 14. 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; ch. 3:8, 17, 18; ch. 6:6; ch. 11:4. Galatians 3:3-5, 14; ch. 4:6; ch. 5:16, 17, 25; ch. 6:8. Ephesians 1:13; ch. 2:18-22; ch. 3:16; ch. 4:3, 4; ch. 5:18; ch. 6:17. Philippians 1:19; ch. 2:1. Colossians 1:8. 1 Thessalonians 1:6; ch. 4:8; ch. 5:19. 2 Timothy 1:14. Titus 3:6. 1 Peter 1:12; ch. 4:14. 1 John 2:27; ch. 3:24; ch. 4:13; ch. 5:8. Jude 20.

The attentive reader must have observed, in following these passages, that I have not cited those which refer to regeneration, a universally recognized work of the Spirit; but only those which concern the reception of the Holy Spirit by believers, and this action in believers. (Compare John 7:39; Galatians 4:6; ch. 3:24; Ephesians 1:13.) If we have lost all this, what becomes of the Church?

I beg the reader that he will go through all these passages in order— that which is not often done. He will not fail to find his reward in doing so. I think that will be worth all the rest of my pamphlet to him.

I always maintain, as the only true and possible meaning of the passage—1 Peter 4:10, 11, that to speak as the oracles of God does not mean to speak according to the scriptures, though this be also necessarily the case, but to speak as announcing the oracles of God, as Martin translates it. For my part, if this be not done, I know not why I should listen. The reason given, namely, “that God may be glorified in all things,” puts it beyond question that this is the meaning of the passage.

43 This is, indeed, just what I thought, provided that in the application one is guided by the Spirit of God. I beg the reader to remember that it is God who inspired the word, in order that the man of God may be perfect. Why has God indited these things by His Spirit? Why has He caused them to be preserved in a written form, if they were of no use for the future? That we have acted in such a way as to hinder this application; that there may have been gifts which we do not possess, and consequently positions in which we are not, is fully admitted. This was true in the times of the apostles also. That is not the question. It is this: Were the writings indited by the Spirit not to serve except for those who lived in the times of the apostles? Had not these writings their application in later times; and, if they had, till when had they? This is the point in question.

This is not, it is true, the whole question. On account of the state of the Church, we cannot do everything that is written; but this does not diminish the authority of that which is written: it only makes us feel the state in which we are. But if, on the-one hand, we cannot do everything that is written, we dare not, on the other hand, do out of our own heads otherwise than what is written. The principle of our adversaries is that we can do what the

apostles did as using the divine authority which had been committed to them.

44 Does not the Bible speak of the Church and of the order which is becoming for it?

45 Here then we find put forth in all distinctness and nakedness the principle that the Bible is of authority and obligatory only in what is absolutely necessary for salvation. Who then is to fix the limits of what is absolutely necessary for salvation? “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” Is this the only point on which the word of God is to be of authority, unexceptionable and obligatory? What a frightful principle!

46 “The Spirit searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God.”

47 This is true even for the weakest Christian; only it is limited to that which he has realized, God not suffering him to be tempted above that he is able to bear.

48 We have already given the proofs earlier. The following are passages to be consulted on the subject: John 11:52; ch. 7:39; Ephesians 2:14-22; ch. 3:5,6; ch. 4:4-16; 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13.

49 This is so far inexact as that His body is not the temple; collective Christians, however, are.

50 Read, “operation.”

51 I will say a word on the “Evangelical Alliance,” because souls are sought to be gained under the sweet name of union.

The foundations of this Alliance are quite different from those which the Spirit of God would or could have laid,

although the want which suggested this Alliance may have been, I doubt not, in great part produced by that Spirit. As usual, man has sought to arrange things in his own way. And, in the first place, the principle of clergy has been made fundamental. A second principle which has been established has been that, in becoming a member of the Alliance, no one was supposed, either to renounce the sect to which he belonged, or to renounce the putting forward of his own principles, a condition without which union would have been impossible. Dr. Chalmers strongly insisted on united action, saying that, without this, the "Alliance" would have no vitality and would not stand. People did not dare to follow this advice; and it was decided that the point should be left on one side! Later on, the English members of the "Alliance" decided not to admit any possessing slaves, a measure which excluded a certain number of Christians of the United States. People were thus led to subdivide the "Alliance" into a certain number of national districts, and to renounce a general union.

Can it be said that this is the unity of the Spirit?

As to the doctrines owned by the "Alliance," they comprise too much or too little to serve as a common ground for all those whom it is designed to unite. It is of little use to enter into other details; for, except a great annual meeting, a great deal of talk, and some local reading-meetings, from which are excluded the Quakers, those called Plymouth Brethren, and, through one cause or another, the greater part of Christians, this "Alliance" does next to nothing.

In France, under the name of "Union Evangelique," the "Alliance" is only an instrument of clericalism and

exclusiveness, and even, it appears to me, without much good faith. I say this, because, if one pretends to seek the union of all Christians, and uses this pretension to make of it an instrument of exclusiveness, I cannot call that good faith. In proof of what I assert, I may mention the exclusive communications made to those who are thought to belong to the clergy; I may mention the fact that there is presented to those who wish to become members of the Alliance an engagement to sign, by which they bind themselves not to be present at a meeting held by any of the brethren professing what are called Plymouthist principles. Is this engagement required everywhere? I know not. What I do know is, that it is required; and it is certain that those who act in the “Union” and for the “Union,” actively make use of the “Union” for the object indicated. That people should oppose views which they do not approve, is nothing surprising, and can readily be understood; but to set up the “Union,” to attain this end under the pretext of union, is what I can understand but cannot honour.

Considerations On The Character Of The Religious Movement Of The Day

And On The Truths By Which The Holy Ghost Acts For The Good Of The Church52 That there is a universal movement on the subject of the position of the Church of God—a movement which breaks many bonds, and upsets many notions—is a plain fact. The world itself is occupied with it. The ties which unite to the State the bodies commonly called churches are waxing old with the forms of society whence they originated. The ivy falls with the crumbling edifice.

In all this the Christian is called to separate the good from the evil. All these movements are connected with the innovations which have taken place in the old social state of Europe— with the revolutions, which have destroyed respect (or rather, which manifest the destruction of respect) for the traditions of their forefathers—respect which sustained at once the social state and the religion of the country. Although formerly some objections were raised against such and such details, men felt, nevertheless, that the country and church of their ancestors were at stake. The fact that a thing is ancient no longer suffices to insure respect for it.

The Scotch movement had this character no less than the others, though in a less evident manner. It shared the softened character of the social revolution in Great Britain; but it was not the less a popular movement counter to aristocratic influence.53 The other free churches have evidently originated in the political troubles of the countries to which they belong.

Was there then no movement of conscience in that which produced the Free Church of Scotland? Assuredly there was. The question of patronage had agitated Scotland for a century at least. In other countries the consciences of a great number of persons, ministers or laymen, had been burdened by the mixture of the world and the Church, or driven to separation by other reasons: but these difficulties had never produced free churches. Conscience acted individually. Some understood one another perhaps, and acted in concert. A secession was formed—a separation, a school of theology, or the like. Individual conscience, and a certain spiritual activity, delivered from the yoke, found free course; but the national body, as yet intact, persevered in judging this as an irregularity, and sometimes persecuted it.

Matters no longer rest there. All is debated. The ties which bound up the whole in one bundle are unloosed. The notion of liberty has weakened the rights of the Church which the state supported. It is no more solely the conscience of spiritual men who, by faith, open for themselves a road in the face of personal difficulties created by associations which they respect. A principle is laid down, as the sole religious principle that maintains the rights of the conscience and of Christ, and, as such, declares itself entitled to occupy the theatre of the world. The providence of God is prominent therein. This is an important consideration for faith and conscience. People desire the Church to be formed according to Christ. Men, long clogged in their consciences, and pushed forward now by providential circumstances, are seen to shake off the yoke of an alien influence, and to act with faith, in the design of forming

a church which answers to the wants of the times, such as they understand them, and to the ideas they have got of what the Church ought to be.

II. Here an important question arises. Is it the duty of all to join this? Is it in this path the Spirit of God leads the Christian?

The heart welcomes the faith and faithfulness to conscience which are found there. Yet brethren, who, for years, have walked outside the religious world, should not, as regards their own position, have need to think of this. For years they have taken a position, and they believe it to be in conformity with true intelligence of the word. While all was quiet, they studied this word; and God shewed them, they are convinced, the path which they must follow. There they have found the blessing and approval of God, while experiencing their weakness and all sorts of infirmities which accompanied their little faith; but seeing so much more, in the midst of all this, how God protected the work, and, poor as it was, acted by it on the conscience of His own, and for the conversion of sinners. They have even foreseen all the convulsion which unexpectedly came to pass, so that it neither surprised nor alarmed them. Partakers of a kingdom which cannot be moved, they awaited, in peace and with joy, the coming of Jesus. The revolutions which have taken place confirmed them in their convictions and thoughts without shaking their confidence and joy. The shelter of a faith which explains all these things, and understands so much the better that nothing it possesses is thereby touched, is a position which spares them the excitement which overpowers men preoccupied by the circumstances of the moment, and makes the state and duties of the Church hinge, in their

eyes, upon the movements of the world, where peace is ardently sought, because it nowhere exists, and where it will be sought in vain by those who desire it here below, till the Prince of Peace come to establish it; though God may, for a time, restrain the billows. The brethren, of whom I speak, I repeat, find more motives than ever for peace, and a retired, quiet walk in the road marked out for them. A secure shelter is so much the more prized when the storm bursts, though nothing be changed in the shelter itself, and even because it is not changed. For them their path—painful for faith at the beginning, but now staked off with so many blessings—has more charms, more attractions than ever; they have more motives than ever for following it.

If men stopped there, all would be simple. “Stand still” is all that there would remain to be said. “Abide in the path where the tokens of a God of goodness recur to you, and where the goodness of a God who directs you, has set you; a path you have found in the word, found in peace, and yet with a heart burthened with grief for the Church, in the midst of the contempt of brethren who then boasted in a position which now they decry with equal energy—of brethren who find the sole bond of union in that wherein they only saw schism some few days ago. Why busy yourselves with aught else than faithfulness to that which God has taught you?”

But here are some considerations which others present to us.

“The difficulties of the times are great.”

“True; but faith strengthened in a path that is known, is not afraid before them, like those who, just departing from a system in which they have lived, find everything

new to their individual faith, and feel themselves, at the same time, called to found a system."

"But (say you) the difficulties are great." Unity is cried up as the only means of strength against the rising billows. "It is a duty. You ought to think of the whole Church, and not merely of your own peculiar peace. If you do not, you cannot be blessed. Let us be unitedly one, for the good and strength of all."

I answer to this, that, as the only means of strength, unity does not inspire me with unreserved confidence. I fear somewhat that, clothing itself withal with the character of the desire of unity, it is a want of faith with regard to the Head which seeks so strongly the support of the members. The conscience of our brethren has long felt the evil; but the importance in their eyes of those who shared in the same system themselves, but who had no strength from Christ the Head of His house, hindered them from separating from them. This subsists still in their minds. These brethren feared then to separate from the mass, because of the importance which their own want of faith lent those who formed it. They fear them in this same measure still; and that so much the more, as conscience and faith enfeeble themselves by hesitations, and delays and weaken themselves by the accrediting of things which they condemn. We know to what point influences so deleterious have led some brethren, otherwise respected by all. "Say ye not, A confederacy to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary," Isa. 8:12-14. Such is what occurs to the spirit of the believer on hearing these cries

for union made to those who are departing from under a burden to which they have so long bowed their back.

But when they tell us, “You ought to be concerned about all your brethren, and not confine* yourselves to seeking your own peace, and your particular interests,” this has a hold on the conscience and heart, and we are engaged, before God, to weigh what this appeal demands of us.

What is the character, what is the force of this movement in the sight of God? what its claims on our spiritual judgment? As regards man, there is good—there is conscience. As regards God, His hand has shewn itself in the circumstances. To what point does His Spirit shew Himself in this movement itself?

Dulness of conscience in these things does not induce me to address the least reproach whatsoever to our dear brethren who have shared it. One is rejoiced, with all one’s heart, that God has delivered them. The heart of the Christian goes cordially to meet them. On their side they will agree that it is a question of our responsibility toward God, of the walk which would glorify Him most. Now, dulness of conscience—this feebleness which has hindered conscience from acting for long years of convictions, during which these dear brethren propped up what they knew to be evil, and even condemned those who separated themselves from their system and walk (and add to that the fact that circumstances have brought about the conclusion at which they are themselves arrived)—this dulness of conscience hinders its activity of to-day from exercising so much power in forming their judgment as to the walk which is to be followed before God by us who already walk outside that which they have just left. Does that hinder our hearts

from being open—cordially open—to these brethren, from receiving them, and wishing to strengthen them, by prayer, as well as by an interest sincere and manifest to the eyes of all? Far from it. For my part (my voice is very feeble), I see God's hand in what is passing. I see conscience in my brethren. My voice would encourage them, as my heart rejoices in it.

The fact that "the hand of God has acted" produces evidently, in the heart of him who looks to God, respect for the movement. God is there, that is evident. This action of His providence makes what is passing to be respected. But, to a certain point, it deprives the work of the character of a work of God's Spirit. I say to a certain point; for I have no doubt that the Spirit of God acts in the heart of these brethren, and I hope also in others not yet manifested. I understood also that the fact of having preceded them in date is far from saying all. "There are first who shall be last, and last who shall be first." I understand that this may seem to say from God, to those who walked outside the world-church, "If you had been faithful—if you had had the faith necessary to make the word tell in the souls I had prepared, I should have had no need to raise up a new testimony." I submit myself, I hope, with all my heart to this appeal to my conscience. It is always good to listen to God. Only it behoves that I seriously weigh what He tells me, and that in the means He employs, if the means be not directly His word, I separate what is of man from what is of God; "the precious from the vile," Jer. 15:19. My brethren, I am sure, will agree to this. Without it I should go astray in a path, which, while presenting something good, would not answer to the impulse communicated by God Himself; and I should lose perhaps much of the

testimony He had formerly confided to me. I repeat, then, that the providential character of the present movement, the impulse it has received from political movements of the day, the fact that it has even sprung up in these movements—all this requires me to consider what is of God, and what is not. It is not, I repeat also, that I see not the work of God's Spirit in their hearts. Nor is it that I attribute the religious movement to the spirit which has produced the political movement. Far from it. Nevertheless, it is plain that the religious movement has been occasioned by the political movement. Consciences were discontented. The Holy Spirit had suggested wants to their hearts. But neither this trouble of conscience, nor this action of the Holy Spirit, gave birth to that which is being done. Revolutions followed unexpectedly. Bonds, in appearance still solid, were found rotten or worn out; and that which conscience and the work of the Spirit in it brought not about, circumstances have accomplished. The Church was not set free by the power of the Spirit; revolutions have freed her. Blessed be God, if His goodness accomplish outwardly that which the faith of our brethren could not lay hold of, that which was offered them by His hand ever stretched out to give them what His voice, in the word, revealed to them!

III. It has not been so when God acted in His deliverances.

Cast out by his brethren, who understood him not, Moses received from God in the bush the rod of his authority. He sets out. He returns to his oppressed brethren, and makes known to them the God of their fathers; and he forsakes Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible,

and had respect unto the recompense of reward. The people, standing still, see the deliverance of God Himself, and their enemies are swallowed up in the "mighty waters." In the face of much unbelief, and in spite of many murmurs, God Himself and His cloud led them through the wilderness, where there was no way and where fiery serpents disputed their passage. It was God Himself who brought into Canaan this, alas! incredulous people, acquainting them with the discovery that, at the end of so many griefs and dangers, their raiment waxed not old, neither did their foot swell. It was the faithfulness of God which nourished a faith ready to die, and which maintained the courage of some in the presence of the unbelief of many.

"Blessed is the man that dwelleth in thy house!" And blessed also is he in whose heart are the ways, the ways which lead to "thy house," and which, "passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well: the rain also filleth the pools."

And when Christianity, that unspeakable gift of God, was introduced into this world, what did we see in Jesus, that Man who lifted not up His voice in the streets? A testimony which was His, purely and profoundly moral— what do I say?— divine, in the midst of a world which had its own ways; a testimony, a life, a person, introducing into this world the light of God Himself, the consolation, the brightness, the power morally independent, which proceeded from Him; and that in a humility which made them penetrate in love wheresoever a broken heart, degraded perhaps in men's eyes, had need of it; a humility which opened the road to a love before which nothing was found too low for God to descend to it in grace. O what need had this poor

world of it! Did He borrow anything from the circumstances which surrounded Him? The contrary was the entire of His life. He came into the midst of these circumstances to reveal God there, because all was opposed to Him, and because, consequently, all was miserable; and God in love entered there in that grace, which much more abounds where sin abounded. Did Jesus meet with the concurrence of circumstances? Certainly not. “His time” was “when man was ungodly and without strength.” This work must have been the work of God. O how happy are we to have a work which is a manifestation of Him in this poor world! Has not God made circumstances co-operate? Yes, all conspires after its way: not that He arranges circumstances to falsify the character of the testimony, as if this testimony were not of God, or as if man were not opposed to Him. Whatever might have been the height of the wall that man opposed to His entrance, to Him, Jesus, the porter opened, and the sheep heard His voice.

We are not Jesus. No, my brethren, we are not. But you would imitate Him; and God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. Here is what the word teaches me: “for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.” And He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth, what does He for those who are thus described on His part? He sets before them an open door, and no one shall shut it. That, then, to which I hold is to keep His word, and not to deny His name; to keep His word whatever may be the weakness of the position in which I am found; to maintain pure, and such as He has entrusted it to me, the testimony of His name. This is what He calls keeping

the word of His patience. Our business is to keep the testimony pure. God will accompany it with His power. Jesus was the faithful witness. The porter opened to Him. God, who ruled all, put the testimony in relief by circumstances seemingly opposed, but in which, in reality, He made all conspire to the full effect of this testimony. He who has all power in heaven and earth will do the same. If it is His word, the word of His patience, even when it shall be with but little strength, He will open and no one will shut, and He will keep us from the hour of temptation, which is coming upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. You know the beautiful name the church bore to which He addressed this promise.

Our task is then to keep His word, not to deny His name, all that His name implies (for the name of Jesus means what He is), to keep the word of His patience.

The testimony of Jesus derives, then, neither its strength nor its existence from the circumstances of the moment: its value consists in this, that He was what He was in Himself, coming from God and giving testimony to Him. God perfectly took care of this testimony.

Let us now examine the testimony of the Apostles. Did this testimony draw its existence, did it originate in circumstances? No. It came directly from God. Not only is this true of the doctrine; it is not less true of the testimony rendered to Christ Himself. Whether miraculously, or by His energy in the soul, the Spirit of God raised a testimony which drew its strength and its character from this energy itself of the Spirit; thus He introduced, and without mixture, the testimony of God into the world. This the world, this the Church needed.

Nor is it less the true testimony, now that the Church is quite mixed up with the world, and at the same time steeped in error.

Outward persecution acted in Judaea so as to extend the sphere of testimony. By that patience of grace which had told the Apostles to preach in His name, beginning at Jerusalem, Jerusalem had been for a moment the centre of God's testimony; but, become hostile to the Gospel, it drives from its bosom the persons who testified. God then recommences His testimony at Antioch, in making of the communications and authority of the Holy Spirit the starting point of this testimony. Never has the movement of the world given rise to that which has been God's own testimony.

Come we then to the Reformation. Is it born of circumstances? By no means. It is (none call it in question) a soul chosen of God, whose anguish goes even to death; a soul hence stripped of its own righteousness, and, what is of great importance, stripped to a great degree of its own strength; who finds a Bible, and in the Bible the marvellous revelation of God's sovereign and efficacious grace. It is not a new revelation, like that of the Law and that of Christianity; and the work is thus mixed up with the inner life of man, develops itself little by little in its fundamental truths with this life itself, and clothes, to a certain point, with its effects the measure of light to which the instrument who accomplished it arrived. But it is the fruit of an inner work. Circumstances, revolutions, in no wise caused the Reformation. The profound iniquity that existed in that which called itself the Church, inasmuch as it shocked and disgusted the natural conscience of man, clashed with his interests, and insulted him in the

feelings that were dearest to his heart—all this was a cause that the truth, which was to deliver the mass from this insupportable burden, gained them over to the support of this truth without having penetrated their hearts; and the work of the Reformation became a work of multitudes and nations. Kings and princes took advantage of it, in order to get rid of the pope, and to be masters at home. The people, no more exalting Rome, resorted only to the temporal authority; and what called itself the Church exalted princes and kings. But whatever form it took, this work derived its origin from God, and drew its strength from God by faith. It was not the fruit of circumstances, though God wrought in many ways to bring about this result, both by subsequent political events, and by the invention of printing and the introduction of the Greek literature of Constantinople, which preceded this epoch. In its cause, origin, and energy, the work was exclusively inward and divine, though not a new revelation, destined to stamp its particular character upon the result produced. A work which is at the same time a revelation, preserves its distinctive character, whatever be the unfaithfulness of man, by the very fact that it is a revelation. But the Reformation was a moral work in man, a work in which the Spirit of God acted; but it was a fruit of the Spirit of God which related to a revelation already given; a fruit which, in the work, made this revelation stand out with a remarkable strength, and which, if the work should fail, sent us, not to the work itself, but to the revelation which was both the source and authority of it, even as God’s Spirit was its strength. Christianity rested much on the Old Testament; but it was a new revelation, as we all recognize. And that is what makes the difference, in this respect, between the modern school of Geneva and

the truth of the position of the Christian before God in our days.

The work of the Reformation was a work of God's Spirit, and of the power of the truth; and its history gives me a proof of this power, an effect of this truth; but it does not give me the standard of it. The Reformation is not a revelation that abides, preserving always the same degree of authority, never ceasing to be the rule of truth, forasmuch as it reveals it; it is but a fruit which can decay, and which sends me back to the rule whose authority maintains itself intact throughout all ages. The Reformation was in no sense Christianity itself. Christianity was not reproduced by it, and that by the very fact that it was not a revelation. It was a very precious fruit produced by the Holy Ghost on this tree already planted. To make of it the standard of truth, of that which God ought to do, is to misapprehend its nature, and, what is much more important, is to misapprehend what is Christianity. We must come to the word, which the Reformation so blessedly exhumed. The Church might have need of certain truths which are found there, and which God in His wisdom brought not on the stage at the time of the Reformation. Not to appreciate the Reformation would be to despise the work of God. On the other hand, to consider the historical church as that to which we ought to return, and as the standard of what we ought to do, would be to disown the living God who acted there, and who acts always; to disown the word He has given us as the sole standard of our faith—and the word sanctions none other; to disown, finally, the power and supremacy of the Spirit, and the care of Christ with regard to His Church, as if we could impose on Christ the historical idea that

we make for ourselves, of His action at a given period, as an instruction and a standard for us as to what He should do now.

IV. Far be it from me to suggest to my reader the thought that the school of which I speak would, in doctrine, establish another rule of faith than the word. I speak of its system, sufficiently know by its writings; a system which, in one manner or another, is found expressed in the Constitutions of the free churches, and the Address of the brethren who withdrew from the Synod of Paris. Now, I believe that to take historically the Reformation as the standard of truth, as Christianity integrally restored, is to make a profound miscalculation, and to strike a blow at the authority of the word in its nature, and at the right to be alone heard which it has.

The consequences soon force themselves upon us. One is forced to make the sin of man appear to be the wisdom of God, because God can make use of everything. Lutheranism and Calvinism are there; Anglicanism and Nationalism, or the union of the Church and State, are there; and men torture themselves to draw from these things (which assuredly are not found in the word of God) philosophical consequences which they apply to-day, and abandon or destroy tomorrow in order to form something altogether new; and in order to make the essay of this novelty, they bring us back to the work which produced what they destroy. Though there be in the Reformation an admirable work of God’s Spirit, it suffices not to adapt to the circumstances of the present time the truths then admitted; a task of which I understand at the same time the bearing, and which contains a just principle as to the walk of the Church of

God. Would we serve God in our generation, let us take the Bible itself, not to question truths already acquired (new truths cannot put aside the old), but let us take it as truth itself.

It is to that I attach myself, and not to a work in man, though it be a work of the Spirit of God. At the epoch of the Reformation, God, all wise, put in relief the truths necessary for His Church. And while I receive them, I do not conclude that God has nothing to make known to me from His word necessary for the times in which we live. It is one thing to find in the Reformation man's liberty of thought—that is, the intellectual principle of sin—and here is that to which Rationalists of every sort limit themselves. It is another thing to find there the communication of the truth which we have to make use of to-day, adapting it to the new circumstances of the Church; and here is the horizon whereby the brethren of the free churches of different shades are bounded: and, again, another thing is to own the work of God and the powerful truths brought to light by the power of His Spirit, and take the Bible as the servant of God bound to this sole rule, without daring either to own any other means of finding His will, or to withdraw from anything of that which is found there, confiding in God, in His faithful love to His Church—a love according to which He communicates the things needful for the circumstances in which she actually finds herself.

In the perfection of the word, there are, I have no doubt, truths and lights necessary for the critical circumstances, for the trying days, in which we are found, which God gave not to His servants at the time of the Reformation; truths which, at least, they made no use of, dragged away by the circumstances in which

they were, and which, on the contrary, we could not perhaps pass by if we would ensure the blessing of the Church at this moment.

The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, Christianity, and even the Reformation, proceed directly from God and His work. It is God in the bush; Christ come from the bosom of the Father; the apostles sent of Him and filled of the Holy Ghost; Paul eye-witness of His glory; Paul and Barnabas sent from the bosom of the Church by the voice of the Holy Ghost; it is spiritual energy which, drawing its testimony from the truth already revealed, established it according to the measure of this energy and the gift which was distributed. I speak of the testimony itself, and not of the instruments or of the form of their mission. Luther and Calvin were raised up by God for a work which takes its rise in their faith by His grace.54 Now, a testimony born of circumstances is clothed more or less with the character which they imprint on it. We are bound to examine to what point it is the word of Christ's patience. The elevated position, both in society and in the world-church which they who render it occupy, may be an element which has weight, looked at from the point of view of providence. God may make use of it, and even employ it to put in the shade and bury a testimony that possesses it not, and that because of its infidelity; and if God found it good to do so, His judgment would certainly be just. But this consideration says nothing as to the character of the testimony itself, and cannot act on conscience, although the fact might act on circumstances.

It is evident this is a public fact, that the formation of free churches has been a result, a produce of the political movements of the day. The consequence has

been that they have not extended beyond the sphere on which these movements have acted. The revolution of the Canton of Vaud produced a free church of the Canton of Vaud; the revolution of Geneva gave occasion to a free or evangelical church of Geneva; and the revolution of February is the cradle of the free church of France.

Does that rise to the height of the testimony of God?

There will be, it is understood, fraternity amongst those different churches. Community of interests and sentiments will produce and keep up, to a certain point, ecclesiastical confraternity; for I speak not here of purely Christian brotherhood, which has evidently other foundations. But does all this answer to the wants which the Holy Spirit has caused to spring up in a great number of Christian souls, and to the exigencies of the love of Christ, and the rights of this love over us? Do these new national free churches answer to the testimony Christ has given at this moment? Have not political circumstances, in the bosom of which they have received existence, left on them a tint, which, in certain respects, absorbs and hides this testimony dear to Christ?

You will admit, my brethren, that it is a serious point for a conscientious soul. You will grant me that we are bound to walk, as much as we can, to the extent of the testimony of the Saviour, and I will not say the entire testimony which is found in the word, as if we had wholly realized it. No. We are all by ignorance below that. At least we should neither be below what we have understood, nor place ourselves in a position which,

modelled according to the little light we have acquired, hinders us from going farther.

This is so much the more important as they already speak to us of schism, if we range not ourselves there, and of a schism which afflicts all the Church. And those dear and excellent brethren, who latterly separated from the Synod of Protestant France, declare to us that it would be a scandal for the independent churches not to be joined with them in the work of the constituent assembly which they are going to summon. I do not take that as addressing itself to me, for I do not belong to the independent churches which they have in view. I speak as the servant of God to the consciences of the whole Church of God. I understand them, and I understand their desire of unity, and the fear with which the effects of division inspire them. I desire neither to weaken their walk (far from it), nor to furnish arms against them to those who remain in evil. I have no sympathy with those who remain there, save the sympathies of my prayers, and of a Christian heart toward my brethren who I see in something which is more than an error, whom I believe to be in a very grave fault, which, though they have not committed it knowingly and willingly, is no less a fault. I impute nothing to them. As I have said, God may often make the last first. We are all under grace—the only hope of us all. But as to their position, I believe it is entirely false. Further, I have no doubt that the brethren who signed the Address to the Members of the Reformed Churches of France sincerely seek to do the will of God in their constituent assembly. But is the starting-point such that the result can satisfy the testimony of God—this word of patience that we are called to keep? And, without risking here a remark on

the circumstances in the midst of which this assembly will be able to unite, nor on the probable consequences of the resolutions it will be called to take, I will confine myself to presenting some considerations on the testimony of God, and on the great principles which serve as the basis to these free churches, as well as to other religious movements; besides considerations which the Lord, I doubt not, has given me to find in the word, which apply to all the movement, and flow from the truths which, in the depths of God's thoughts, precede the movement and govern the whole subject. If the signers of the address deign to read this, they will feel that I have not slighted that which their heart put forward to Christians.

V. The Constitution of the Evangelical Church of Geneva, laying down something precise, will give me an evident opportunity for presenting my thoughts upon these things. This constitution, having, besides, the pretension to unite the Christians of this city, and claiming rights over our consciences, demands some observations. This pretension is not expressed, and could not be, in the letter itself of the constitution; but it is in the writings of those who are occupied with it—writings which accuse of schism those who do not join this new church.

I appeal, nevertheless, to all my brethren.

The fact that the Evangelical Church of Geneva is the church of a single city, has preserved it from certain things which, in my eyes, are contrary to the word, which (bear with me, my brethren) disfigure the constitution of the Free Church of the Canton of Vaud. A considerable part of its doctrine freely expresses truths which it is my happiness to believe and my joy to hear

expressed by brethren whose sincerity and piety I honour. But when I come to the question of the Church (and surely this is the question, when men are making one), I find a gap, or rather error, which seems to me to attach itself to all the work of the free churches, and to make their position essentially false; and I pray my brethren to be willing to weigh this point seriously. It is found at the bottom of all the questions which at this moment agitate the Church of God. I shall speak frankly and with candour. I owe it to my brethren. It is true brotherly love.

The error at the foundation of their work will always hinder it, as it seems to me, from satisfying the wants of a large number of enlightened Christians, as well as the heart and intentions of Christ, and from answering either to the wants arising out of the difficult times through which evidently the Church of God must pass, or to the light which those trials, I doubt not, will cause to break upon souls. Their work will be partial, and will not last, such at least as it is at present. It has not roots deep enough in truth, and particularly in the truth of which God is now making use. The foundation of the truth as to the Church is wanting. Instead of drawing its essential character from the everlasting truth of God—I speak not of salvation, but of that which concerns the Church—it seeks it in the circumstances and habits of the moment; so that, in proportion as we advance and circumstances alter, a further difficulty will be produced.

I beseech my brethren to hear me. I make no question of their sincerity. I sympathize with them in the difficulties through which they have passed, and which have influenced their walk. I own the faith of several among them, who were obliged to act in the face of the most

painful circumstances. My heart goes forth to them in all these respects. In aqting according to the principles set forth in the different constitutions of free churches, they will succeed, perhaps, in uniting a certain number of persons. Their faith, their personal influence, the wants of many souls who are seeking something better, the confidence which their persons inspire—confidence, without doubt, deserved, so far as that may be said of man— all will contribute to this; but I feel assured they will not work the work of God, such as they desire to make it. I count on their love, and that they will believe me sincere. I expect from their Christian honesty, that they will do me the justice to believe that I have studied the word of God on this point, and that what I present to them is what I believe to be a truth of God, absolutely necessary to the blessing of His people.

Let them smite me. Alas! I am accustomed to it; but let them hear.

Here, then, is that which I assert:—

The idea of the Church, so far as it relates to the present question, is wanting to them. Perhaps this remark already produces impatience. For the sake of the glory of our common Master, I beseech them to grant me some moments of attention. If I do not produce conviction in those dear brethren whom I respect, at least I shall have made known to them the grave— and for me obligatory—reasons, on the ground of which I cannot walk with that which would deny the principle I am about to explain, because I judge that in denying it they would not do the work of God. If conviction is not produced, charity, at least, will gain ground.

In the discussions I have had in England on this subject (I speak not of the frightful heresies which have broken out there latterly); in my discussion with Mr. Rochat, with Mr. Francis Olivier, in the arrangements of the Free Church of the Canton of Vaud; in those of the Evangelical Church of Geneva, and up to the recent attacks of Mr. Monsell; it is, with all, the absence of the idea of the Church which has marked all their reasonings, and all the constitutions of the free churches. I believe this truth—with that of the coming of the Saviour—the most important, the most vital which can be at this moment; not for individual salvation, but for the walk of the Church of God, and for that of the Christian whose assured salvation is already realized in his heart. It throws light upon this salvation itself, and upon the doctrine that establishes it, which it confirms with new lustre. It gives to this salvation a fresh importance—a far grander bearing.

Mr. Rochat had well understood what the question was; and though at the end he declared that his ideas on this point were modified, he had in clear and precise terms denied the existence of the Church, such as I had defined it. He felt that such a doctrine, if true, rendered the dissenting systems impossible. He was right.

He sums up his views and mine in the following words: “But what I have denied, what I deny still, is that which the author affirms, and which I believe him unable to prove—the unity of the Church in the sense of a society here below… A fundamental error into which the author has fallen, and which falsifies all his reasoning… is that he considers the Church a sort of body,” etc. Mr. Rochat adds, that the passages I had cited relate “not to the unity of a society, which would have tended to make of

churches a single body, responsible, and having a common destiny, here below, as to its existence as a society," etc.

The same point was at the bottom of my controversy with Mr. F. Olivier.55 Remember the question is not about the Church as a body infallibly gathered in glory, but about the Church as one body here below.

Here are his words: "Mr. Darby owns that the word church means assembly; and though he cannot deny this truth, namely, that the body of Christ never has been really gathered here below, and that the different churches have never been united in one single assembly, he ceases not continually to represent the Christians living on the earth, at a given moment, as being one assembly, with the responsibility of this assembly; and he calls it the assembly of Christ—the universal assembly on earth."56 "Could he better insist now on the idea of a Church assembled on earth, and receiving, for this reason, the name of church or assembly? But that cannot be, not only because the Church was never united in a single assembly here below, but also," etc. "But that this whole, this totality, was one assembly, and that for this it was named the Church, I presume the author no more thinks of sustaining it."57 "When Mr. Darby affirms that the totality of churches here below forms the Church, he goes also too far, seeing that what forms the Church is not only the totality of the churches at a given time, but the totality of the believers in all the succession of ages between the first and second advent of Christ."

"Mr. Darby's manner of thinking makes a division of the body of Christ in two, and even makes two bodies of

Christ, if I may say so; namely, first, this pretended body of Christ that God should have created complete on earth," etc.58 "I could not charge myself with any responsibility in respect of this pretended exterior body, … or this would-be assembly, which, however, has never been assembled."59 "Now, this view is contrary, at once, to the notions which scripture gives us of the totality and unity of the Church, as well as of the assembly of the Church, since the earthly body of Christ, which Mr. Darby believes to have been formed of a totality of disseminated churches, would never have been really assembled here below."60 Such is the language of Mr. Olivier.

I will not make any observations on the passages just cited. I confine myself to begging the reader not to take what is there said of my views as being an exact representation of them. My object is only to establish the fact as to the doctrine.

The Evangelical Church of Geneva believes that particular churches, established in different places, and more or less a mixture of regenerate and unconverted persons, ought, etc.: "it believes, also, that over and beyond all those particular churches which have been, are, and shall be, there exists before God a holy universal Church, composed of all the regenerate, and forming a single invisible body of which Jesus Christ is the Head, and of which the members shall be manifested only at the last day."61 Here are ideas sufficiently precise. There are particular churches, and there is an invisible universal Church. Now I say that the idea of the Church, such as the word of God presents it, is entirely lost here.

The constitution of the Free Church of the Canton of Vaud goes farther. It makes of their Vaudois flocks a body which, according to it, is a church, and the spouse of Christ.

Mr. Monsell sets forth views fundamentally the same; but I pass by his essay here; I will speak of it elsewhere. It is not necessary, either, to speak of the opinions which are in vogue in England.

An evident consequence of the opinions just cited is, that there exists not a unity like that which we find in the apostolic times, and that it is not even sought. The movements which we witness are national. We have a free church of Scotland, a free church of the Canton of Vaud, an evangelical church of Geneva, and the reformed churches of France.62 Now, what is the scriptural idea of the Church?

I leave aside the idea of the invisible church, an idea which is not found in the Bible. An invisible assembly is almost nonsense. There will be a universal Church manifested in glory in the day of Christ.63 Far from being invisible, it will be seen in all the glory of its Head. The children of God, alas! are but too often hidden in the world; and in this sense one may speak of an invisible church. In this case, where is the city set on a hill? where is the light which the Lord would not put under a bushel? To say church is to say assembly. Air. Olivier makes use of this word to say that, since believers have never been all assembled, there has been no assembly, nor church consequently, except by a figure which consists in speaking of a part for the whole.

The word of God, on the contrary, speaks positively, as of a matter of faith, of an assembly—of a church on earth

responsible for the manifestation of the glory of Jesus and of a Father's love—of a body acting by its members.

I do not insist upon the Church as about to be, at a future period, gathered completely in heaven, because I suppose we all own it.64 I do not speak of a particular local church formed in each city, because I recognize them in the word; I suppose as nearly all our brethren do. When the question is about sects and denominations, this subject becomes, it is true, important. I speak of the Church on earth. Now what I find in the word is an assembly on earth formed in the unity of one body by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, the Head being in heaven.

It will be remarked, that the fact that the Holy Spirit is come down from heaven is of primary importance; because it is what establishes plainly the distinction between the state of the body viewed here below, and the heavenly state of the Church in glory. God, in the accomplishment of His counsel, will establish the Church, Christ's body, in the same glory as her Head in heaven. That is the idea of the Church in its plenitude: but, just as that has always occurred, God first set man in a position of responsibility with regard to the things which it is His will to accomplish at a later period by His power. Thus Israel was set under that law which, by and by, will be written on their heart. Now if it be thus, it is evident that the lot of the Church on earth hinges both upon this position and upon the faithfulness that she displays there. But it is that very Church which these selfsame persons disown, deny, or understand not, even those who are acting with a view to raise her up again at the important moment to which we are come.

VI. Let us see if the word of God shews us such a Church — a body one and unique upon earth.

I repeat my thought. Christ having ascended to the Father, the Holy Ghost is come down, not only to quicken (that had been already), but to gather in one single body on earth the children of God—a body of whose unity His presence was the source and strength, so that all the believers were members of that body.

What says the word on this subject? Ephesians 1:22. This passage gives us the idea of the grand result in the counsels of God; namely, all things subject to Christ who had created them, and the Church united to Him, as a body of which He is the Head; the body being thus the accomplishment of the Head, who could not remain without the body.

The French, the modern French at least, hardly gives this idea, because the word chef in the acceptation of head is grown obsolete; and one can hardly say of Christ that He is chef over all things, though one might say, at the head of all. Taking chef in the etymological meaning of head, the sense is clear; head (chef) over all things to His body, which completes the Head to form a whole.

Chapter 2 of the Epistle to the Ephesians presents to us the means which God employs for the accomplishment of this work of grace; that is to say, what is done in time for the accomplishment of the everlasting purpose of God. The Jews had been a people brought nigh to God; the Gentiles remained afar off from Him, and, at the same time, separated from the Jews by the ordinances which constituted these as a people on the part of God. By His death Christ abolished these ordinances to make of the two one new man, and to reconcile them in one

body to God by the cross. Then the preaching of it was made to them who were nigh; and, says Paul to the Ephesian Gentiles, “to you which were afar off”; so that they were built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (prophets of the New Testament; compare chap. 3:5), Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: “in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”65 Where? On earth it was assuredly that the tabernacle of God was formed by the presence of the Holy Ghost.

In chapter 3 of the same epistle, he explains the mystery; namely, that the Gentiles are of the same body (a joint body) as the Jew, and closes by saying, “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.”

The Church, then, is here considered objectively in all its extent possible; but it is, nevertheless, viewed as one body on earth, and as being on earth the habitation of God through His Spirit, who is come down and has united Jew and Gentile in this one body. That is the vocation in regard to which it is said, “Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”

Unity is not simply a unity of life. Life does not make unity. I pray my dear brethren to pay attention to it. The source of unity is the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. And, though we have faith and common sentiments, life leaves us in individuality. All that in general is sought, and would be called unity, is

community of sentiments and faith. The presence of the Holy Spirit Himself unites us corporately, and constitutes us members of this body. In the mind of the apostle, the motive to, and the character of, unity were drawn from the existence of the body; and he exhorts us to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; for there is one body and one Spirit.” And on what foundation does the apostle establish these things? On this, that Christ is gone on high and has given gifts to men (we know this is by the Holy Ghost come down from above), in order to edify the body of Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and growing by each supplying joint (allow me this word), according to the measure of the energy of each part,66 makes to itself increase of the body, to the edifying of itself in love. The body of the child is still a body. It is nevertheless susceptible of increase. Such is the idea of the Spirit of God. I have said “makes to itself,” for the form of the Greek expression implies it. However this may be, the doctrine is evident. All the body, acting by its members, acquires and produces increase of itself. The body is there. It grows, but is there, and this is certainly on earth. It is not in heaven that it grows by the gifts. It is not in heaven that ministry is exercised. It is during the period in which Christ is on high and the Holy Ghost, sent from above, is here below, that this takes place, in contrast with the heavenly state of the body. God willed that this body should be placed here below in this position of responsible activity, according to the power of the presence of the Holy Spirit, before manifesting it as the accomplished result of His purposes, according to the efficacy of His power, who leaves (in what He would effect) no lack, no defect, nor anything that answers not to His intention.

The first Epistle to the Corinthians teaches us the same truth: “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. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit,” 1 Cor. 12:12, 13. It is clearly on earth this baptism of the Holy Ghost takes place; Acts 1:5. “Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers: after that, miracles; then, gifts of healing,” etc. Set where? Not in heaven, assuredly. There is then a body, the Church, on the unity of which the-apostle insists—unity which should be found on earth. The apostle speaks of the body, of the Church, of unity, as things existing and manifested on earth, not in an accidental manner, or as part of a whole which touches the earth by one of its extremities, but as flowing from the presence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to form this unity on earth, to gather in one the children of God who were scattered. Though there be for those whose service is already closed the rest of the disabled, the army is no less an army; neither does it cease to be still a whole, though it be recruited from time to time with new soldiers.

While admitting the unity of the Church manifested in its time of glory, and the existence of particular churches, here is the unity of the Church, such as it is very clearly presented in the word of God; and as to the final result with regard to His own, God will keep this Church to the end. But, as manifested on earth, it was bound to maintain the testimony of Christ’s glory,

according to the power of the Spirit which was in it. Has the Church done so?

It is a question, not of the faithfulness of God, but of that of the Church. God is faithful in keeping Christians individually. But, though the Spirit abide in him, the Christian is often unfaithful. Just so, if, as a system that God established for the manifestation of His glory here below, the Church has failed in its testimony, God can put it aside as far as concerns this testimony. He has not done so yet; and, as to the result willed of God, the Church will be raised and in glory. I speak not merely of salvation, but of the manifestation of the Church. The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it; and God will keep it, in spite of everything, to the moment of its rapture. But besides that, it was formed to give here below testimony to the glory of Christ. Having failed in this aim, God can cut it off as to this service, with all the system that attaches to it here below. The word of God gives the clearest testimony that this is what He will do; and that He will introduce another dispensation, in which Christ will personally execute judgment, and will maintain the righteousness and glory of God on earth. It is then that the Church, according to the counsels of God, will be, as a whole, such as it has been foreknown, and, gathered on high as the Bride of the Lamb, will be manifested in glory.

Now, all the systems of free church and dissent set aside the idea which the word gives of the Church. Consequently, the attempts to restore the Church by such means are faulty in their foundation, in their first principle, in the parent idea of all that takes place. The authors of these systems do not put themselves before God according to His thoughts in this respect. However

excellent may be their intentions, their conscience is not reached by those thoughts. They do not seek, in nearness to God, that which circumstances demand, because they have not the thought of that which God sees in them. How measure evil when they see not what ought to be? Not having the idea whence they are fallen, they cannot, consequently, hear the exhortation which calls them to think of it. They may accomplish a certain good, for God is good. This will soon be but one difficulty more on the road of faithfulness and of God's testimony.

I request my brethren to read Isaiah 22:8-14.67 Not that I desire to pronounce the judgment which is found there: I pray them only to weigh the moral principle which is there developed. Yet the moment, to which that passage refers, is that in which God was manifested in favour of Hezekiah, because there was some faithfulness; 2 Chron. 22:4, 5.

There are many other passages relative to the Church besides those mentioned above. Thus, in 1 Timothy 3:15, it is certain that it is on earth, the house of God here below. In the Apocalypse the Bride says, Come. It is evidently on earth. The scriptures give many other proofs of it still; but I have only cited the passages which expressly treat the subject.

This is then, dear brethren, with all deference to you, to whatever country you belong, the reason why I cannot join the free churches as they are presented up to the present. What hinders me is not only that, in the different organizations of this work in- different countries and in other points of detail, I do not find them founded on the word of God; it is not even ignorance of this precious and important truth of the unity of the

Church on earth, established by the Spirit come down here below. You will find in the midst of us, I have no doubt, persons who are ignorant of it also. That which hinders me is, that this work—and let us take as an example the constitution of the Evangelical Church at Geneva, the foundation which is there laid—denies the foundation which Christ has laid, for that which ought to be a testimony for Him here below. What is nearest to His heart, as regards that which is here below (and it is with this our responsibility is connected), ought to be nearest to our conscience. But the work we are discussing is the very denial of the principle in question. To restore, to raise up again the Church—and this is just what you pretend to do—you give for a basis to your work the denial of that which the Lord Jesus established. You will understand me, my beloved brethren. I speak neither of the salvation of individuals nor of your personal love for the Saviour. That, you will confess, is not the question between us. I speak of the systems you establish. This injures all the development of truth; but I do not enlarge on the subject at this moment, nor stop as to certain details which have given rise to grave difficulties.

VII. The constitution of the Evangelical Church in Geneva claims some further observations.

This constitution aims essentially at the establishment of a clergy, and in this manner it shuts up all the gifts into the establishment of the elders, which form a separate order.

“The Church,” says the constitution, “recognizes the universal priesthood of believers, in virtue of which each one of them is called to draw near unto God, without any

one being intermediate other than Jesus Christ, in order to worship Him in Spirit and in truth, and to proclaim the excellencies of Him who has saved him."68 I suppose that (without having heard of the universal priesthood of believers) one has recognized that each can worship God, without this being granted by the constitution. And provided the clergy be recognized, it is generally admitted that every Christian is to be allowed to publish the excellencies of Him who has called us. But this is to admit the universal priesthood in such a manner as to limit it as much as is possible in the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

"However," adds the constitution, "the Evangelical Church recognizes the necessity of a special ministry as an institution of God and a permanent want of the Church. In consequence, she has elders and deacons."

See, here is the ministry—all the ministry. And this the article following confirms:—

"The elders are all enjoined to feed the Church. We distinguish among them the ministers of the word, who, prepared by holy study, are more especially called to teach and to preach."

I fully recognize the ministry—a special ministry—as a thing instituted of God.

Is this the question here? No. The article quoted interdicts absolutely all ministry outside a ministry officially established by men. "The church recognizes a ministry… In consequence, it has elders and deacons."

I leave the deacons for the present.

Amongst the elders, one distinguishes elders who are ministers of the word and elders who are not. In this

there is no recognition of any other ministry than that which has been officially established by the laying on of hands. Besides the deacons, there are only the elders to make up “the ministry.” This is simply the clergy, without the frankness to own it. What else is it? The only ministry is that of the recognized elder. Again, in order to be minister of the word, one must have been prepared by holy study. What is that, if it is not the clergy? Is there the least difference?

Let us suppose a Christian, blessed by God as an evangelist for the conversion of ten times more souls than all your elders together, because of the gifts God has imparted unto him. Never mind: it is not a ministry; and he is not a minister of the word, because he is not amongst your consecrated elders. Perhaps he is a young unmarried man, who has not the qualities required of God for a bishop, possibly not even the gift of teaching, for one can be a good evangelist without having that gift. It does not matter. He cannot be a minister of the word. He is not in the number of your elders.

And you complain of schism because one does not submit to such things?

Woe to him who so denies the authority of Christ, and the gift of God, as to submit to it!

You erase with one stroke of the pen chapter 4 of the epistle to the Ephesians. You deny the authority of Christ in His own house, as well as the rights of the Holy Ghost; and you talk of disobedience! You confound the bishop with the evangelist; you will not have any, unless it be some of your own bishops; and if there are any others who are so from God, you deny it to be ministry; and you will have us to submit to this, under penalty of

your anathema as schismatics! Is it, then, you who have the key of David, to shut and to open, so that there should be no ministry except that of your bishops and of your deacons?

You decide too quickly, my brethren. The Master is still there. Better would it be for you to confide more to Him. Is it His house that you direct thus? Take care! It is a serious affair to meddle with the Church which belongs to Him. He is Son over His own house.

He will act in spite of you. He shuts and no one opens; He opens and no one shuts. In this respect, your position is worse than that of the ancient clergy, which hardly meets with the support of anyone. The ancient clergy are in a difficult position: at least, they obey traditions which the course of ages had formed into a habit. But now he who has put himself forward to this work professes that clerisy is of the enemy, and, with this confession on his lips, he again makes a clergy. I call your constitution as a witness of this! For to deny all ministry which is not that of your consecrated elders—to recognize no other minister of the word but your pupils in theology—what is it else, but to institute a clergy? And you re-establish it while saying you will not have any more of it.

Article 12 of your constitution, where mention is made of “brethren who might be called to some work of evangelization,” seems to contain a contradiction. But no. This article which, in a way so singular, speaks of those brethren called to some work of evangelization—mentioning them besides the ministers of the word, as if those who are called (of God, I suppose) to some work of evangelization were not themselves ministers of the

word—watches that these also (for they feel that there will be some, in spite of all) should not escape the clerical system, and should not work without the Presbytery having laid hands on them. Yes, you establish a clergy, and an all-exacting clergy, which does not surfer any to work outside of its authority, and which accuses of schism all those who do so. Consequently, it is more than a sect. It is Rome on a small scale. It is Rome in its system; and it is; in fact, a sect.

There is another thing to remark; that is, discipline.

Dear assembly of La Pelisserie, if you had not wished for a clergy, you would not have come down to this. And I say it with feelings of sincere affection for the brethren that are there. After having been united to them in the sweetest bonds, I am still united to them by the strongest ties—those of love. Brethren of the Pelisserie, the principle of the clergy has destroyed you, and now you cast yourselves there, where one reaps the fruits of this corruption.

In order to satisfy the exigencies of your position, it has been sought “to conciliate unity in the faith with variety in the form.” The new church “has recognized that there exists among its members different wants as to worship.” Consequently, you may serve God apart every Sunday, with the exception of one Sunday every month. And, in exchange for this sacrifice (and this is what they call unity!) there is granted to you the privilege of being members69 of the new church.

As to the discipline which maintains this body and its outward order, and which makes you to know who are the members thereof, here it is:—

“Discipline is exercised by brotherly rebuke in charity, in order that in everything the doctrine of God our Saviour may be glorified among all. This duty concerns all the brethren, and more especially the elders. In extreme cases, these may have recourse to the Presbytery.”

Is this all?

Yes, it is all. The putting away is not even mentioned. It is excluded, for discipline is exercised by brotherly rebuke.

But, you will say, although the first words quoted are too wide, there is something more for extreme cases.

Yes, there is something else, and it is this: “These (the elders) may have recourse to the Presbytery.” Is it not saying enough that the matter is entirely left to the clergy, and that the conscience of the brethren is reckoned as nothing at all?

That the elders should enlighten the conscience of the flock, guide it to a sound judgment, and exhort it to act according to die word; that they should even succeed in terminating happily many things without the intervention of the flock, and even better than with that intervention, this is assuredly a good thing. But in the article which is before us—recourse to the Presbytery by the elders in extreme cases—this is the discipline of the Evangelical Church. To enter into her bosom, she asks for a profession of faith in the presence of two elders. If the question be about judging those that have entered, the elders can have recourse to the Presbytery. For the ministry, there are consecrated elders, of whom some are ministers of the word, prepared for that by holy study. And the faithful, what can they do? Obey. They

have now been provided with elders, with official persons, whom they can obey.

If this is not the clergy, it will assuredly be difficult to know what is.

Alas! there remain still in the question, as a whole, some very grave difficulties, which relate both to the character of the work and to that historical church which, in practice, serves her as a foundation, and which gives the measure of the truth which they there profess as their testimony.

I recognize, my brethren, your sincere desire to maintain fundamental truths against fatal errors, and I appreciate it, I believe, sincerely. But the unity of the Church—true bond of the saints—being laid aside, as well as the liberty of the Spirit, who, centre of this unity, is found there alone, it is necessary to arrive at an agreement by the aid of mutual concessions, which reduce the testimony to the lowest round of the ladder, and which thus grieve lie Holy Ghost who renders this testimony.

This truth, mutilated by reciprocal concessions, becomes the measure of the faith of the body which unites upon that foundation. If, after having signed a confession of faith of this kind, in order to accommodate myself to other persons who do not believe what God has given me to believe, in order to walk by that means with them; and, because they will not admit of more than that, I insist upon the truth with which God has entrusted to me, I fail in my tacit engagement, since we are together on that ground. Such an engagement grieves the Spirit of God. In order to walk with man I should have renounced the testimony of truth. I should have failed

towards God, precisely in what He has entrusted me with. God acts in the Church through the testimony of His truth. He uses instruments, and trusts them with this truth. In the accomplishment of their task they ought to act with charity, with wisdom, giving milk to the children, meat to full grown men, and, in general, laying on the conscience of the Church the truths through which God acts upon her i in a word, distributing the nourishment in due season. But if I form an agreement with those who will have only milk, so as that this should become the common ground, the term, the condition of communion, I deprive myself of liberty—of a liberty which, before God, is my duty. It is an agreement; it is not union.

This is what is clearly seen in the constitution of the Evangelical Church of Geneva. She does not seek that which is according to the word while bearing with the weak ones; but, recognizing that there are diversities of views (and whoever knows Geneva could name them), she does her best to conciliate them. Take worship; take discipline. Those who, certainly, had made the most progress are the only ones who make concessions. The preachers (art. 20) keep their monthly (Lord’s) supper, while another class of Christians deprive themselves of theirs on that day. Some preachers, transformed into elders, preserve the arbitrary right of discipline; others abandon discipline. That is to say, in order to agree, principles are given up, and they arrange a system on the lowest ground possible. This even takes place in things more grave.

Take the doctrine of the coming of Jesus—a doctrine so solemnly important in these last days. I receive, with all my heart, a Christian who does not understand it. As a

Christian he belongs to Jesus, a member of the body of Christ, and I love him. In receiving him thus, my liberty of ministry is kept untouched, and I exercise it with regard to him, as also towards all, according to the wisdom which God gives me, in charity. But if, instead of abiding a member of the Church, I place myself so as to become a member of a church, in accepting a document —although there may be nothing false in that to which I subscribe—I commit myself, nevertheless, to something. I say, There is my faith; and thereby I lose the power and the virtue of the testimony I ought to render. In this case, unity depends on this, that I am a member of the particular body to which I attach myself, and this by virtue of the agreement I have just made. As to the coming of Jesus, the authors of the constitution of the Evangelical Church have gone as far as a document concerning the truth could permit them. The paragraphs thirteen and fourteen of their profession of faith, relating to the coming of the Lord, are made up in such a manner as that every one in the world might sign them. The thirteenth might suffice for any one who believed in the coming of Jesus before the thousand years, without hurting any of those who oppose it. It is composed of two passages almost textually quoted. The fourteenth is made more for those who do not believe in it, without wounding, however, those who do believe in it. Each phrase of it is true. The whole paragraph is skilfully conceived for peace.

Is it thus that one arranges truths which ought to be sharper than a two-edged sword? My mouth would be closed on the subject of the coming and of the appearing of Christ; or it would only open itself by giving me a bad conscience! And if I sign the fourteenth paragraph, and

an anti-millenarian signs it equally, shall we give to these words, “He shall judge the universal world,” a similar sense—an equal bearing? By no means; and by our silence we deceive one another. “The wicked,” adds this paragraph, “shall go into everlasting punishment, while the just shall enjoy eternal life.” Assuredly; but what just are spoken of? when?70 We sign both the one and the other, to walk together as if we agreed, knowing very well that we are far from believing the same things. This cleverness is trying to me. I believe that the coming of Jesus—the judgment of the world by Jesus, when He shall appear in glory, of the world such as it is, filled with living men—is a doctrine of the highest importance, which must be announced in a manner that is clear and developed, and in all its power; and I cannot myself resolve to torture the phrases, so as to reduce the testimony to the level of expressions which the man who does not believe in them can bear. This is not to feel the importance of the doctrine before God. And if I do not feel its importance, I cannot render testimony to it: it is not faith.

If you insist so much on your views in things secondary, you will say to me, that all union is impossible.

I shall answer you, first, that to call this secondary, as testimony, only means that you do not feel the importance of it. This is not my case. And this is precisely that to which I will not lend a hand. If you rest on the foundation, which is Christ, I receive you with open arms in the unity of the body of Christ. If you are speaking of making an agreement for a common profession, as the means of union, your observation is just; but this it is which makes me fear your principle of union. I feel the sword of my testimony broken in my

hand. If you love the Lord Jesus according to truth, to me you are heartily welcome. If you deny any foundation doctrine, we do not walk together. But to make accommodations with regard to that which concerns my testimony, I cannot do it. The fault does not consist in having been firm for the truth: I honour my brethren for having been so, and for having professed it. Truly, I do not seek for union in indifference as to error, which is the great sin of the day, and the form which incredulity takes in our age, devoted as it is to materialism. The fault of these brethren is the looking for a way of union in themselves agreeing upon the terms of a confession of common faith. Perhaps you had not any other, by reason of your seeking to produce union, instead of recognizing it in the unity of the body of Christ.

In this case, that which you call the church is only an arrangement of men, to which you may perhaps assure the consent of a certain number of signers. Far be it from me to put the Church of God on such a footing. If you are not of the Church of God, none other do I acknowledge.

I find, then (I shall not say the truth, because I do not believe that would be in the intention of my brethren, but), the testimony to the truth compromised in a compromise connected with the truth designed to secure union. The only true principle of union is to be members of the body of Christ. Once united, the most faithful care to maintain truth is an imperative duty of the disciples. The Church owes it to Christ in the care she takes of the sheep.

I see, then, in the work of which we have just been speaking, an agreement between men, and not the

Church of God. I find the testimony to the truth compromised—and a testimony to the most important truths.

VIII. I shall add here three points of the deepest interest, in which the truth unfolds itself, and by which the Holy Ghost witnesses to souls.

Before noticing them, I ask my reader to pay attention here to a consideration which renders the matter more clear.

Certain truths are at the foundation of Christianity itself as a whole. Others have to do with its efficacy or the making of it good towards men. There are, thirdly, some which relate to the means of its reception, and even of its communication. Thus, for instance, we find at the very root of Christianity the existence of one God, the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, His humanity, and such like doctrines. Just as the existence of one God was the fundamental truth of Judaism, and the truth alters not, so likewise the revelation of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and, in connection with that, the revelation of the Person of Jesus, distinguish essentially Christianity. Roman Catholic theology admits this.

But there is, besides, a class of truths which concerns the relations of man as a sinner with his God—with God thus revealed. And here the work of Christ, as mediator, is unfolded in all its extent.

With regard to this, I see three principal positions in which Christ has been manifested, or will be manifested: in the infinitely precious work on the cross; in the position of Jesus at the right hand of God (a position to which corresponds the presence of the Holy Ghost here on earth); lastly, the return of Jesus Himself in glory.

This relates to the sufficiency of Christianity for establishing certain relationships between man, as a sinner, and God, according to the counsels and love of that very God against whom man has sinned; and for placing the redeemed one in the joy and glory which are destined for him.

It is in this that the Roman system fails entirely. It attributes to the sinner, not the work (as regards which it is as a matter of history in the truth), but the appropriation of the efficacy of the work which Christ has accomplished, an appropriation which, it says, takes place either by means of the sacraments— whence results the establishing of the clergy in a mediatorial position, and, in consequence, necessary to the soul—or by works, so as to deny grace and the state of ruin in which man finds himself; to place him under the terror of the law; and to make him dependent on the priest, and not on God, to whom, as a hard Being, exacting the uttermost farthing, his heart is not drawn, and out of whose presence his unpurged conscience drives him.

Oh, how precious to our souls the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ! What do we not owe to our God! In contrast with this darkness, the Reformation appears and shines in all its lustre, which is the brightness of the testimony of the grace of God. And, as a testimony of the grace of God, it has established with a happy clearness this foundation of grace, which is, at the same time, that of the work of Christ, upon which the relationship of the sinner with God has been established by God Himself.

In saying this, I need not add that I esteem this work in the highest degree. A poor sinner, whose soul depends on this work and on this grace, and who, in knowing and

enjoying them, has learned to love the glory of God, and the souls ready to perish of those by whom he is surrounded, cannot otherwise than value this work.

Other considerations, without which the price of this work would have been again made void, come to the help of the one we have just presented.

The Reformation made the certainty of my knowledge of this truth, and the faith I have in it, to rest upon the testimony of God instead of that of man. This is a total and entire difference. God takes the place of man in the salvation and in the knowledge of the salvation. The word of God is the foundation of the faith in His work by the grace of the Holy Ghost. What I find in the Reformation is not that the spirit of man has been made free, although in a good sense that is true. It is not merely that it has made good the claim of man to read the word, although, as regards other men, that is true also. What it has made good are the rights of God, the grace of God; the admirable right of God to save the sinner in His love—precious salvation of which Jesus must have the glory; the right of God to communicate to the sinner the testimony of His grace, and to assure him of it Himself by the word which He had given him; the revelation of the grace of God, and, by that very grace, the immovable and precious rule and foundation of man's faith. Who will dare to say (not to man, "Thou shalt not have it"; but) to God, "Thou hast no right to give it, to communicate it Thyself to Thy servant?"71 To put these things in the broad light of day, such was the beautiful work of the Reformation. We should always bless God for it. But we must not shorten His arm and say, Thou hast done all. He whose grace has given us the Reformation is the living God. The Lord, whose work

made, for the instruments which God had raised up, the subject of their testimony, nourishes and cherishes still His Church, and purifies it by the word. Does He say nothing to us now? His own, who have ears, do they not hear anything in the midst of the storms which burst forth, and which proclaim to those who are hidden in the Rock of Ages that the Lord is coming forth? Or does the fear of these heralds of His power prevent them from hearing the still and small voice which speaks to the heart of His own? We are hidden in Jesus, my brethren. The impetuous winds, and the shakings which announce the Lord, do not frighten us, nor touch our safety or our peace. We know Him whom they do but announce; and while announcing Him, and that solemnly, they are not the things which, for the heart of him who knows Him, have the power of His voice. His word is that—His word communicated to our hearts by the power of His Spirit.

Well, my brethren, I believe that His voice is speaking to us. The Lord would, I believe, that, however humiliating for us, our hearts should take notice of other truths besides those which the Reformation set forth—truths which confirm these.

He speaks to us of His Church. He speaks to us of the return of His Son Jesus from heaven. His Church has need of it.

Everything is shaking. Everything in the world is stirred up by that interior strength which, acting as from the centre of the moral world of man, shakes and tosses the whole surface, the unwonted agitation of which frightens those that walk there, at the thought of the overthrow that is about to follow.

What is there solid? what immovable?

The Church of God, because Christ loves her.

The question is not merely about salvation. Without salvation one can evidently have nothing else. But in the midst of the agitations of the world and the waves of the peoples, which God only keeps in subjection for the moment, where is peace, duty, the circle of affections?—where is their “own company” to which the apostles themselves would resort in the agitations and the troubles which they experienced in the midst of an incredulous nation, and which, to its own ruin, would rebel against God?

It is the Church.

It is God, you will say to me.

Surely. But towards what does God direct the heart, the thoughts, the affections, of him who is near Him by faith? It is towards the Church. This it is which is dear to Him in the world. If, in His grace, He seeks poor sinners, it is the Church that ought to gather them together.

Where is the Church?

Here is that which answers to the second truth of which I have spoken with regard to Christ.

While Christ sits at the right hand of God, until the Lord makes His enemies His footstool, the Holy Ghost, who was sent from on high when Jesus Himself went up to the Father, remains here on earth a witness of the redemption of those that are His, and the power of their gathering together again in one body—of the gathering of the Church, which is the body of Him who, as its Head, is seated at the right hand of God. That is to say, just as Christ on the cross accomplished redemption, Christ, at the right hand of God, gathers together the

Church on the earth by the Holy Ghost whom He has sent from on high from the Father.

This last truth the Reformation neither set forth nor unfolded.

It admitted, no doubt, as an orthodox truth, that the Holy Ghost had come down on the day of Pentecost. But it instituted national churches, as Saxony, Hesse, and England, etc. (that is to say, churches of nations, grouped geographically in churches, and, as being such, organized in relation with the State and subject to its power) having their confessions of faith according to the light which their directors had been able to pick up.

This, as regards churches, is what the Reformation has produced.

Men are no longer satisfied with it.

Why then establish any more, giving them as a foundation that which the word teaches as to salvation, instead of considering what it says on the matter which occupies us?

Who, in establishing free churches, has asked himself—What says the word of God on this matter? My brethren, it was not thus they acted at the time of the Reformation. In the midst of difficulties and of conflicts much more serious than those with which we are surrounded, they looked to the word of God. The Reformers were men of faith. As to difficulties, they needed none besides God. As to their walk, the word guided them. They dared to obey, because they reckoned upon God for their strength and their protection in the path of obedience.

Why not imitate them in this?

This may lead us to humiliation, and to a walk in appearance little glorious, with little éclat, which appears of no importance. But, if God leads to it, it will assuredly be the way in which He will bless His people. Allow me to remind you again of the passage in Isaiah 22:7-11.

You are thinking to establish a church. Have you thought what the Church of God is, according to the word—the word of Him who made and fashioned it long since? You recognize that, with regard to this, the Reformation has not done what God wished, according to what is revealed in the New Testament. What, then, does the word say? And while revolutions have produced free churches, is it not true that the word of God speaks of a Church formed by the presence of the Holy Ghost come down from on high, who put that Church—the one only body of Christ—in relation with its Head, seated at the right hand of God? And save the churches of such and such place—churches whose local unity is established equally by the Epistles and the Apocalypse—the word of God does not mention any other church. Churches that found their limits in the circumference of the countries inhabited by those of whom they formed part, is that which the word of God makes not the least allusion to. Such churches cannot, either in fact or in affection, be the Bride of Christ. They are necessarily in relation with the country wherein they are found. The unity of the body of Christ is lost to them. The order, the walk, the links, the whole machinery—all, in one word, in their operations, is necessarily restricted within the limits of the country where the church is found. It cannot be the functions or the regulations of the body of Christ. These they set aside. I am not speaking of the uniformity of

details; but of all that which forms the body; the moral springs of the institution. The body of Christ is not recognized. The unity of the Church becomes a unity quite different from that of the body: the body becomes quite another body than that of Christ. It is a body which acts in an independent way—a self-regulating body, which has its spring in itself. The Consequence of this is, that the Holy Ghost, who gives this unity to the body of Christ, is not recognized in this character. All that belongs to His presence, as come down from heaven to unite the body to its Head, and to act in the members for the increase of the body, is lost in its reality. He acts, it may be, in spite of what is called the church; but He does not act by that which is the system of it. The Holy Ghost cannot recognize a body which He has not formed, but which man has formed. And to form such a body is not recognizing the body which the Holy Ghost has united to the Head. One cannot say that these churches are the body of Christ. The word and the Spirit do not recognize any other church besides the one that is such. I speak not of a local assembly.

I prefer presenting to my brethren this truth as an object of faith, rather than as a difficulty which, as to its relation to them, obstructs the way of him who submits himself to the word. The Reformation, the historical church, cannot put us in possession of this truth, which it does not recognize. An invisible church does not answer the wants of the heart which this truth creates. The Church—the body of Christ—is, in the world, the testimony of the power of the Holy Ghost, who can abide in the midst of believers, because they are accepted in Him who appears before God for them; the testimony, also, of the glory of Christ upon the Father’s throne. The

Church is the dwelling-place of God upon earth, as the temple was before the coming of Jesus. It is the Bride of Christ.

Be assured, my brethren, that there are spiritual affections, relations known and felt with the Lord Jesus, to which the word attaches great price, and whence flows precious light, which makes the love of Jesus shine in a manner quite peculiar, and reveals the object of His affection and of His cares; that there is, in a word, a whole part of the Christian life, and of the love of Jesus depending upon this truth, which he who has the knowledge of it, by faith, could not consent to give up. In doing so, he would sin against Christ. I speak of what Christ nourishes and cherishes as His own flesh—of what He sanctifies and purifies by the word.

Would you like us to forget it? Ought we to withdraw from the influence of the truth that speaks to us of it? I speak of the Church of God.

Why make a church, instead of thinking of that Church which God has created to be the first-fruits of all His creatures, co-heir with His Son, and the Bride of the Lamb?

That is what the Church will be in the glory, you will say to me. This is true. But its gathering together takes place upon the earth; and its unity flows from the presence and the baptism of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. She is one by the Holy Ghost upon the earth, as well as with Christ on high.

And this is what leads me to the third truth which I referred to—a truth which the Reformation left out entirely, and even let fall into the hands of fanatics, into

the hands of die enemy. I speak of the return of the Lord.

Does not the word of God present us with the return of the Lord as a truth which ought to act powerfully upon the conscience and upon the heart? And are not existing circumstances a serious appeal of the Lord to think of it? The truth that the Lord is coming quickly to judge the habitable world, to execute judgment in convincing the wicked of all their wicked deeds which they have wickedly committed against Him, and of all the injurious words which impious sinners have spoken against Him—ought such a solemn truth to be kept bound in the horizon of God's testimony as an object lost at a distance?— the sweet and precious thought that Jesus will soon come back to receive His own, to gather His Bride to Him, and to shelter her in the house of the Father, in order that she may enjoy eternally there the love which has saved her—is it to remain a stranger to the life of every day of her pilgrimage here on earth, far away from her Bridegroom?

Let us see whether the word of God does not present, whether to the world or the Church, the coming of Jesus, under these two points of view, as a continual motive.

I do not speak either of the great white throne, or of the judgment of the dead. When He sits upon the great white throne, Jesus does not come. The dead alone are standing before Him. Heaven and earth pass away before Him. "They were no more found." Jesus, sitting upon the tribunal of God, calls for the dead to appear before Him—a solemn day, of which the eternal consequences are of a nature to produce seriousness in

our souls! But all this is not the coming of Jesus—of Him who is to come back in the same manner as He went.

I speak of the judgment of the living, of this world which we inhabit. What does the Lord say of it? “As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be… For as it was in the days of Noah, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” The same thing happened in the days of Lot. They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone, which destroyed them all. So shall it be in the day when the Son of man shall be manifested.

“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”

“When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord,

and from the glory of his power: when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

Here are some testimonies—and the word is full of them — concerning the coming of Jesus to judge the living. For, alas! the kings of the earth shall be gathered by evil spirits, for the battle of that great day of God Almighty. They "shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for he is King of kings, and Lord of lords."

"The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof," Psalm 50.

"And he that is called the Word of God shall tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God," (Rev. 19); and that when the harvest shall be ripe for the sickle and the grapes of the vine of the earth shall be ripe.

God is full of goodness and patience. He only strikes when iniquity is come to the full. He still seeks souls while it is yet the acceptable day, the day of salvation. No one knows the day "when he shall rise for the spoil." But who will say that the harvest is not ripening for the sickle, and the grapes of the vine of the earth are not filling up for the day of His wrath?

That day shall not overtake as a thief those who are the children of the day—the children of light; but it is because they are the children of the day. Instructed beforehand of the judgments of God, they belong to Him who is to be the Judge, and not to the world on which the judgments will fall. They wait for Him, from heaven, who has saved them by His grace, who delivers them

from the wrath to come. Redeemed by His blood, He who has redeemed them is dear to them; and they wait as to glory for Him who, by His grace, has made them capable of it.

Now, let us see if, according to the word, this thought does not influence the whole walk, and does not rule all the thoughts of him whom the love of Jesus has introduced into the way in the pilgrimage of faith.

I do not pretend to present you here with the proofs of the doctrine. Although the study of the teachings of the word on this subject is of the highest interest, my aim is to make you see, my brethren, that the truth of which we speak, that the hope of the coming of Jesus, connects itself with the whole Christian walk in every connection of it; and that, in consequence, it is one of the most practical truths.

Is the question about conversion? They had been converted to wait for His Son Jesus; 1 Thess. 1.

Is the question about the joy of the work, and of the communion of the saints? “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” (1 Thess. 2).

Is the question concerning holiness? It is “to the end he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints,” 1 Thess. 3.

And what will, perhaps, strike more the minds of some, and will shew to what extent the Church has departed from the habits of thought which the Bible inspires is, that at the moment when the afflicted friends of a Christian just departed surround his bed, the apostle

comforts them with the thought that Christ will bring him back. “Now, my brethren, I would not have you ignorant concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

If one gave this as comfort now, on the occasion of a death, what would be the effect on the greater part of Christians in our days?

Is the question, again, of a life irreproachable in every respect? “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” 1 Thess. 5.

In the midst of the strongest persecutions the thought of the appearing of Jesus came in as the time of rest. “Rest with us,” says the apostle; “to you who are troubled rest, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.” How could such a thought afford consolation to the soul, if this hope of Jesus was not a real and present hope?

Is the question concerning the trying circumstances of life, and of patience under oppression? The same comforting hope is present to the heart of him who suffers. “Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.”… “Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” …“Behold, the Judge standeth at the door.”

Is the question about responsibility? “I charge thee in the sight of God,” says Paul to Timothy, …” that thou keep this commandment, without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

And, as motive, measure, and mark of spiritual progress, we know that, when Christ shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And whosoever hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure.

“Yourselves,” says the Lord, “like unto men who wait for their Lord,” etc. That is the character the Lord would have His disciples to put on. What is it, on the contrary, that marks the iniquity of those who hold the place of servants, iniquity which brings in the cutting off? If it is the language of the wicked servant to say, “My master delayeth his coming,” has the Church of God nothing of what is similar to this to confess in her history?

What is the character that the profession of Christianity took in the beginning—a character which this profession has lost, and that Christians are called to put on again? What is the proclamation that awakens them? Here it is: —

The kingdom of God is like unto ten virgins, who went forth to meet the Bridegroom. All, alas! went to sleep. While the Bridegroom tarried, the wise, no less than the foolish, lost the thought of His speedy coming.

What awakens them, puts them into a suitable position, and sets aside those that had no oil? At midnight a cry is heard: “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him!” Then all the virgins rose. And this is what puts to the proof the state of souls. Could there be any sort of evidence more solemn to set in relief the truth which, at the beginning, characterized the Church, converted to wait for the Son of God from heaven? to shew how the spiritual slumber has taken hold of her, and what means God uses to awaken her?

If the Lord will comfort the disciples whom He is about to leave: “I go,” says He to them, “to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place, I will come again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am ye may be also.”

If the angels sent from heaven are to give a just and healthful direction to the thoughts of the disciples, who were still looking upwards after Him who escaped from their sight, they announce His return to them, saying, “This same Jesus, which is taken from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

Finally, is the question respecting the feelings, the most affectionate, which the revelation of Jesus, the bright and morning star which is to arise, produces? “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” And Jesus answers, “Surely I come quickly. Amen.”

This solemn word closes the word, as a whole. The response of the faithful heart, moved by the Holy Ghost —” Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

This is what the Holy Ghost has left to vibrate on the heart of the Church until the Bridegroom comes.

In one word, if the coming of the Son of man threatens the world, who rejected Him, with the just and terrible judgment of the God whom incredulity, shall know in His wrath—Him whom it desires to be ignorant of, and rejects in His grace, spite of all the proofs which have been granted to it; as it is written, “Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: Lord, when thine hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see,” Isaiah 26:10, 11. If I say, the appearance of the Son of man tolls the hour of the pride of the man of the earth, it is, on the other hand, to the coming of the Son of God that all the thoughts, all the affections, all the motives of the faithful are bound up. The hope of this coming used to characterize and form the whole Christian life. Joy, glory, holiness, rest, consolation, patience, everything in Christianity of the New Testament relates to the coming of the Lord, whose humiliation and work had laid the foundation of so glorious a hope. This hope crowned the whole of the Christian life, and separated the Church from the world, to be, as the Bride of Jesus, entirely for Him—her heavenly Bridegroom.

This is not, my brethren, proof of the truth of this doctrine— it is not that which I have sought to present you with here; but proof of the manner in which this truth is connected with the whole of the Christian life.

Is an abridgment of the Christian doctrine required? Take Hebrews 9:27: “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” Or, to use another passage, “Now the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath

appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, justly, and godly in this present life; waiting for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." The appearing of the grace that saves opens the way to the appearing of glory.

These are two great truths:—the Church, a body formed upon earth by the presence of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven; and the return of Jesus to receive His Bride to Himself, and to come back with her to judge the world:— two truths essential to the glory of Jesus, and the instruction of the Church in the circumstances in which it is found—truths which the Reformation did not set forth in the light, and which answer the wants of the moment, in the work which the Holy Ghost accomplishes, as it seems to me, in preserving that which is the ground of all the truths—the work of Jesus on the cross, and the dignity of His divine Person.

IX. The institutions which the Reformation established, even considered as the effects of the work of God, are passing away. What is to be done then? That is the question.

In bringing souls back to the Reformation, and to nothing farther, does one meet the need which, at this time, the Holy Ghost produces in them; that is to say, according to the thoughts of His grace?

I do not think so. That you have motives sufficient for separating from a system which puts the true doctrine of the glory of Jesus on a level with the denial of that doctrine, I grant. But that is not the question. The question is about setting up the reformed churches of

France, or the Reformed Church of France. It is not, observe, what were the symbols of the primitive Church, howsoever ineffectual they were. At that period, the Church was standing, and professed her own faith in rejecting certain errors; for, in fact, symbols are in the main always negotiation (that is to say, truths presented so as to guard against certain errors). But here, that is not what you do. By a profession of faith, you wish to place, or, if you like it better, to induce the churches to place themselves on a given basis, confessing, at the same time, that you do not copy even the institutions of the Reformation; and you expect (a desire in itself holy and excellent) that all Christians will unite with you.

The question thus becomes very serious.

The ensign for rallying which you propose, is it sufficient for gathering Christians together again? A great number of Christians, who share with you both in the same faith and in the principles of the Reformation, remain attached to the institutions which the Reformation created. They are wrong in your opinion; but they do it. You adopt the truth in the measure they profess it; only you wish it to be so set forth as to exclude those who deny it; that is to say, you make of this denial of error the basis of your new system.

Truth, say you, is a principle of life. I believe it.

The churches, you think, existed because they had faith. This is rather a mistake, as to history. But grant it.

The measure of truth which the Reformation did possess produced the institutions which you abandon. You do not take up a symbol as a standard for rallying; you confine yourselves to adding a formula designed to exclude the French heretics, if they are honest. Will this negation

suffice as the foundation of the work of God, which alone can rally His children? For, besides that, the same truth will still be found in the old system; and, at the side of it, the error which, for oneself, one avoids.

What then would be the effect of your course? A division; the formation of two camps—not of two camps, one of which would be united together by the truth, and the other by error, but of two camps of which one would admit truth and error, with traditional influences and the institutions of the system j the other, truth without error, making separation obligatory, and drawing its strength from that very separation.

Will this motive (a motive which will, I have no doubt, act upon a great number of upright consciences) suffice to re-unite all the children of God? For, while laying down sound doctrine for the foundation, the truth in question is but partial.

You separate from those who will not confess their faith. Feeling, as to yourselves, the obligation of doing so, you profess your own.

Dear brethren, I respect you in the bottom of my heart. I am satisfied that your aim has been the glory of the Lord. But what do you present to others? What sign for rallying have you which, in principle, would re-unite all Christians according to the wants of the Church, and the everlasting truths which will answer these wants?

You re-produce, at very best, the fundamental truths of the Reformation, truths which produced what you have just left; you re-produce them unfolded, so as to make a clear distinction between you and the sad denial of truth, which is the symbol of the camp which you no longer support. That is to say, when the question is

about forming something beyond the sphere of individual salvation, you have nothing but a negative principle, which separates you from that which exists already, and which condemns it. Many of those that are found there, possess salvation as well as yourselves, and through the same truths. You re-gather Christians, by making such an exposition of these truths as separates those who adopt it from those who do not receive these truths.

As regards a church, the Reformation only produced what you forsake. Possessing only the principles which formed that which you forsake, what will you put in the place of that which you leave? A church of separation, that denies the kind of corporation of which she possesses the constitutive principle, and nothing more. For, while acting in the power of the truth which saves souls, the Reformation produced, in point of fact, nothing but the body with which you will have nothing more to do. Its result in France was not even the formation of a national church, but simply that of a body of professors. That is what you are. What makes the difference is the denial of indifference as to the truth, and, for the moment, the faith of those who are acting.

Do I blame you, my brethren, as to your individual act? I approve it highly. The only thing that strikes me is, that you do not approve of a confession of faith as the basis of your work; and that you substitute for it a profession of individual faith, so expressed as to meet the errors of the day. But first, one might in this case act without separating oneself, if it is only individually one does it. If it is inconsistent to remain, as an individual, along with persons who deny the Gospel, because it would be sanctioning them, you ought a long while ago to have

left them. Affection for the system kept you there. Will you, then, continue in this system of “the many”? In that case you will soon be again in unbelief. Multitudanism, without confession, soon becomes indifferentism. If you changed systems because it was bad, why did you remain in it until the question of doctrines was touched? Do I reproach you for having come out of it now? Far from it. In my sight, that is an evident duty. But—dropping this consideration, and likewise the character of faith, and the energy which are manifested therein—I seek in your position principles which may serve as the ground for the gathering of God’s children; and I doubt whether a faith which rises not above a negation suffices for that. For that, something more is needed than what was sufficient as a motive for withdrawing from a mixed body, of which happily you no longer form part.

It seems to me that your present position is upright and honourable, and that if it is rather late, God at least approves you now. But are you thereby in a position which enables you to lay the foundations of the re-gathering of the children of God, so as to answer the wants of these critical times? Or, in hasting to do it with what you possess (or rather with what the churches of France possess, for you feel you cannot do it yourselves), do you not risk the doing it on a foundation too narrow, too little based on the energy of the Spirit of God, such as He unfolds it, to accomplish the purposes of the grace of God, to accomplish His own peculiar work? I understand your fears, lest, in waiting, souls should grow cold.

Energy is good, but it does not confine itself to laying foundations, when they are laid in a moment, in which, while one is building, it is to be feared that God is acting

outside of what one does. Your eagerness makes manifest that, in order to maintain truth and re-unite souls, you still reckon upon the institutions which you have just left; and that the truth which you profess is not sufficiently distinctive to retain souls in the position in which you wish to keep them, seeing that other persons, who have this truth in common with you, remain in the old system. It is enough to say, that a formal separation is the principle of re-union; and, for vital principle, your new institution has but the truths which produced that which you abandon.

Is separation sufficient to serve as a rallying point, and to re-unite by a spiritual responsibility all God's children? That is the question. Is it not true that your project reckons on the traditional affection of souls for the reformed churches of France? We place ourselves again on this ground, to raise the ancient standard. But you share with others the influence of this sentiment.

Faith, which reckons on God, does not make haste, as if the thing was not in His hands. You make a church—a serious and solemn task! Is it the Church of God?

You desire union sincerely, and for the glory of God. I believe you, my brethren. But who can lay foundations such as that they shall embrace all Christians? God alone. There needs not only portions of truth—not only truths so set forth as to repel those who deny them; there needs the positive truths by which God acts to gather together again His own according to the actual wants of the Church. Because you have had to fight against those who deny them, you think that the precious truths elicited at the time of the Reformation will suffice. Are you sure you have reached the height of

the thoughts of God—that your views include the whole sphere in which the energy of His Spirit manifests itself?

You will say to me that I am proud. You will ask whether I pretend to do it. No, my brethren. But I do not pretend to draw up on paper a church constitution which claims the adherence of all Christians, as if it were the sphere in which this energy of God's Spirit manifests itself. I act according to the measure of faith God has given me. That is all. Do likewise; God will bless you; and to him that has shall more be given.

If you do not pretend to be able to make a constitution which is according to the depths of the counsel of God concerning His Church at this time, do you well to think of making any constitution at all? Would it be well for you to condemn all those who, having the thought of something more, do not like to limit themselves, or rather to limit God, to the measure of that which He has given you at this time in His grace? It is certain that you cannot go beyond it. Ought you to impose it as a limit? I do not speak, dear brethren, in order to put opposition in your way: nor do I think of opposing you in what I have just now said. I know what prejudices exist. I bless God for the step He has given you individually to take. I even believe it very possible that, your faithful step leaving without excuse those who remain united to that which is evil, blessing will in great measure leave them as to the very truths they do maintain.

This is what I have thought I saw in the ways of God. When the work of the Spirit in Christians embraces all the extent of God's thoughts, and all the energy of His power, it re-unites all His children. This it is which took place at the beginning. If the case is not so, God must

act elsewhere, because He cannot abandon His own. If a partial energy will create for itself a system and formal institutions, it becomes a sect. God will bless you, my brethren, in your faithfulness. I believe it, and I desire it with all my heart. I only desire there should be sufficient largeness of heart to weigh what I have just been saying; and that there might be the fear of God, so as to feel what a serious thing it is to lay the foundations of a church, so that it should have the right to demand that all should enter therein. If one makes any other church than that, one necessarily makes a sect.

If I unite myself with two or three children of God, I act according to my faith, and upon a principle which embraces all the Church of God, such as God sees it.

If I lay the foundation of a constitution, I make a church; and, in this case, what is the church I make? Does it answer entirely to what God has said of a church in the word?

In acting according to what one has, God will give more.

In establishing a church, I limit the circle of my blessings to the wall of enclosure that I have made myself.

The apostle says, “That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

My brethren, I pray God with all my heart to bless you.

Let us seek peace and the good of His Church.

52 Geneva, 1849.

53 An influence which now withdraws more than ever from Presbyterianism, and more than ever attaches itself to the Episcopal system, as in England to Puseyism.

54 The reader will find, in pages 11, 12, and 29 of the Address of Paris brethren, their principles on this point. Here are some of them, which will make what is at the bottom of their thought understood:—

“Thus spring up [say they] the living and popular professions of the Church, which are those of all its members, which answer to the actual attacks of infidelity, and resolve the difficulties of the time.

“We place ourselves again on the ground of the Reformed Churches of France. We raise with our feeble hands the colours which drag in the dust. It is worth while to pick up this noble standard of our fathers, which is the standard of Christ—of Christ boldly and clearly confessed.”

55 Mr. Olivier has latterly had a protest published to shew that he retains the doctrine of the Church. The reader will find the sort of passages which have made me say that he denies it formally.

56 “Defence of the Principles,” etc., p. 75.

57 Ibid, pp. 88, 89.

58 Ibid., p. 93.

59 Ibid., p. 125.

60 “Defence of the Principles,” etc., p. 94; and “Essay on the Kingdom of God,” pp. 116, 117.

61 It is the reproduction of Mr. F. Olivier’s views, with this difference, that Mr. Olivier makes the Church consist of all the believers between the first and the second coming of Jesus; and the constitution of the Evangelical Church of Geneva makes it consist of all the regenerate, an expression which must embrace also the believers of the Old Testament.

62 I know not if our brethren of France have advanced a step in their ecclesiastical ideas, and rejected the idea of a reformed church of France. In general, they speak of the reformed churches of France; but they speak also of a church, and the projected constituent assembly seems about to unite the reformed churches in a body. Some explanations would be desirable on this subject. Nobody, at this time, should seek to create embarrassment for them by inducing them to express themselves on that head: not I, at least. Their Address being only provisional, perhaps we ought not to seek in it anything but a language long used. However this be, speak they of the churches or of a reformed church, it is a question always of a church of France, or of the churches of France.

63 The constitution of the Evangelical Church of Geneva does not admit the visibility of the Church, even in glory. The members of the invisible church will be manifested in the last day. This shews how far the idea of the body of the Church is destroyed by the notion of an invisible Church; a notion which, moreover, dates, I think, from the time of St. Augustine, when the Spirit of Christ made that pious man feel that the exterior church answered in

no wise to that which the word said of the Church, while the exterior body was always the church for superstitious consciences. We know what influence St. Augustine exercised on the Reformation, though the energy of the Holy Spirit acting in the Reformers far surpassed the measure of St. Augustine. It will be well to remember that the present movement seeks to bring us back upon the ground of the Reformation. And precious as that work was, is it at all the thought of God to bring us back to it? Perhaps our brethren of France will not bind themselves to stop there. They cannot bless God more than I for the work itself of the Reformation! Would to God that we had the energy which was displayed then!

64 We have seen, nevertheless, how singularly this idea is weakened, and even lost, in the constitution of the Evangelical Church of Geneva.

65 Some have wished to see here nothing but the church of Ephesus; but clearly, in all the passage, while it addresses itself to the Ephesians, the ye signifies not only ye Ephesians, but ye Gentiles.

66 The expression, de chaque partie, would be better rendered by the old phrase, d'une chacune partie.

67 "And he discovered the covering of Judah, and thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest. Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many: and ye gather together the waters of the lower pool. And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall. Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool; but ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect

unto him that fashioned it long ago. And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth; and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts. Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts."

68 The manner in which the article quoted above speaks of worship is very unsatisfactory: the relations of the disciples with the Father are there completely forgotten. And it quotes 1 Peter 2:9, omitting even chapter 2:5, and confounds that with John 4, of which it mentions verse 24, omitting verse 23. The relationship of the disciples with the Father, in Christ and His name, according to the power of John 16:26, 27, is omitted. These things become very important when the question is about setting forth the foundations of the believer's relations with God. They form the character of the faith of all who are cast into this mould; and God will even have it so, that their state be according to their faith. It is in the order of His government that the vital principle of things be reproduced through the whole duration of their existence. Accidental defects disappear through the influence of grace. The creative principles are reproduced, and even unfolded. Therefore it is not without importance carefully to weigh these ecclesiastical constitutions; and however they may contain very good things, the Christian ought to examine upon what foundation the whole rests, and whether it is the one Christ laid down. If it is not, opposition to one's brethren is not what keeps from joining them. We must exercise forbearance towards ignorance. It is seen in us

in many things, even in those things that we ought to know. I need not tell my brethren that I am conscious of it. The reading of the Bible makes me every day feel it deeply; and I look above. But to accredit ignorance at the outset of one's walk is another thing. This dishonours Christ, and vitiates in its origin, and thus (inasmuch as that is in man's hand) in the whole truth of its being, that which Christ has most precious here on earth, His Church, which they propose to restore.

69 A principle which, in itself alone, denies the unity of Christ. We are members of His body, and of nothing else.

70 It is not as to eternal punishment that I, for a moment, raise a doubt here; but I believe that the passage quoted here applies only to the living—to the nations on the earth, to the judgment of the living, a truth of the utmost importance for the consciences of those who attach themselves to this world, but a truth which has been quite neglected.

71 It is evident that if I send orders to my servants, and if any one prevents their receiving them, he encroaches less upon the rights of the servants than upon mine. It is the same as to the word of God, which God has sent to His Church: an argument that has been too much forgotten in the controversy upon the right the faithful have to read the Bible.

The Church And Its Friendly Subdivisions

Editor's Note 72

In Reply to Mr. R. W. Monsell

Chapter 1.

It is not my intention to occupy myself with Mr. Monsell’s attacks on his brethren, and I hope that those amongst them who can feel themselves hurt by his decisions and accusations will keep themselves perfectly tranquil.

The Lord has said to us, “Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also”; and in such cases experience has made me feel that the best answer is to keep silence, and to continue to labour for the glory of the Lord in doing good.

I pray my God, with all my heart, that He may grant me to justify His goodness and His ways, and not my own. My earnest desire, my earnest prayer to God, is that He may keep me from defending a cause, and that He may give me to be only occupied with His truth. The times are too serious for me to defend any party whatsoever. It is a poor device of the enemy, engaging in such a path, in order to turn away our energy from that which is precious to God, and from that which makes His thoughts of any avail against the work of that enemy.73 If the work which is attacked is not of God, let it fall. If it is a work of God, a light of God, let us not stop to justify ourselves; and, in the place of that, let us insist, for the blessing of all the Church, on the truth, which is its

foundation. If the walk of those who have professed this truth has barred its progress, let us not be surprised if those who combat the truth which we profess, seek to take advantage of our faults. The remedy for that is to profit by those reproofs, by humbling ourselves before God for that which has given rise to them; and we owe a debt of thankfulness to Him who causes us to see that which might stop the progress of the work of God, which is unspeakably dear to us.

The work, which for many years has drawn the attention of Christians, is, I believe, a work of God; and, on the confession even of those who oppose them, it is a question of truths infinitely important to all the Church.

I wish that these truths may remain prominent.

The enemy seeks, by the tract of Mr. Monsell, to turn the thoughts of Christians away from them, and to injure the energy which maintains them. My desire, in writing, is to put them back in their place.

Beside, the tract of Mr. Monsell is fitted to disturb people’s minds on questions of secondary importance, which he regards himself as such, and by it to turn them aside from more important things, and from that pursuit after such a knowledge of Christ as nourishes the soul. Even when we would wish it, we cannot, at this moment, withdraw ourselves from these questions, and it is useful to put them in a clear light, in order that minds may be free to think of better things. We must at present occupy ourselves with elders, in order that there may be that tranquillity which makes us capable of occupying ourselves with Christ.

I entreat my brethren to seek much the presence of Jesus, that they may be in a state to put things in their own places, and to attribute to them their right value.

In the place of Christ without elders, elders without Christ would be a sorrowful exchange.

John saw elders in heaven, and they were in a higher place when, leaving their thrones and their crowns, they prostrated themselves before the throne and before the Lamb, than when they were crowned and in their places.

Let us, above all, be worshippers, and keep ourselves cleaving to the truth. The Lord is coming soon.

The object of Mr. Monsell, and he avows it,74 is plainly, to compose a new church system out of the remains of old dissent and the scattered brethren who expect the "Church of the Future." He informs us that the system which he "finds to be biblical" is nowhere established.75 To accredit this new system, the one now existing must be depreciated, as well as the brethren who were already labouring in the field. The dissenting tendency of one part of the Free Church is evident. The opportunity was too favourable to be missed. He will allow all sorts of things in these brethren, provided they join themselves to his work and to himself.76 He suggests to his Swiss brethren rules of conduct, to win to their side, if possible, all the flocks in the midst of which they may be found, or if that does not succeed, to separate themselves from them as from "gnawing leprosy." He hides, under a very transparent veil, that he is speaking of the flocks of "Brethren," when he says that there is scarcely any means of reaching his end in great assemblies, because there are in them always brethren well taught and decided; but that there is more

hope of gaining “the little churches of the villages.” The pages quoted contain a curious appeal to the “Brethren,” on which he makes sure of producing some effect, to act after the same principles, which he accuses other Christians of putting in practice; and he ends in a very curious way, by asking them to send him money, and by adding these words, “This will act as a visible bond between us; and what better bond could we desire?”

If that be the only subject of the tract, what necessity is there, it will be said, to draw thereon the attention of Christians? None, in reality; and if all ended there, silence would be enough. But to attain his object, Mr. Monsell treats of many subjects, which may disturb the hearts of “Brethren,” and of very important points as regards the work of God; and it is well that brethren should know at the same time what is the object and foundation of all this. It is then on the subjects mentioned I desire to occupy myself.

For my part, I have a sincere respect for old dissenters. It is not for the sake of the system which they have sincerely and conscientiously followed, and which I have frankly and honestly opposed, because, instead of members of Christ, they would have members of a local church, and because they elect amongst themselves presidents; but I have not a single bitter feeling on the subject. I do not make it a subject of reproach. It was their conviction, a false conviction, in my opinion, but all that is gone by. That which makes me respect them, and that which for me is not gone by, is that, formerly, they suffered for the testimony of the Lord, an imperfect testimony it may be, but sincerely rendered to Him whom we all love. It is the turn of “Brethren “perhaps

now; and there are some old dissenters who cordially joined themselves to them and who have suffered with them. I have a sincere respect for those who, whether they be still living, or whether they have already entered into rest, have suffered for the name of our common Lord. I hail with joy the faith of those who have taken part in the trials of their brethren of to-day. I do not wish to close my eyes to the new light which God has given me, and some of these dear brethren have, I believe, committed the fault of so doing. But their fault, I hope, is there, where are my own sins, at the bottom of the sea, out of the remembrance of our God, because of the blood of the Lamb.

Chapter 2

Whilst totally leaving aside the attacks directed against the “Brethren,” I will make in passing some remarks on the history which Mr. Monsell tells of Plymouthism, and which he has arranged so as to support his arguments. It is thoroughly inexact. The beginning of the “Brethren” was not, as he said, the isolated acts of several brethren in various places, and that too without any understanding between them. The meeting where, Mr. Monsell says, there were more of the Anglican clergy, than at the first meeting of the Evangelical Alliance,77 had nothing in common with the meetings of the “Brethren.” It was on the invitation of a single person, who received and lodged them in his own house, a meeting the object of which was the study of prophetic questions. Let us take note, however, of the largeness of heart recognized amongst brethren, and let us remember that the Lord Himself began by putting Himself within the reach of all; but He saw Himself

limited to a small circle before He had accomplished His course. It is the special character of truth, which acts in love, to begin with a full and large heart, and to find itself soon enclosed within narrow bounds, by that which it meets with in the hearts of others. It is on a little flock that the heart of the Father rests. May brethren remember this, I do not pretend to say, that we were perfect, like Christ (we are very far from that), nor that the hostility of which we are the objects ought to be attributed solely to the pure malice of the adversaries. And, in encountering attacks such as those of Mr. Monsell, it is hard to keep the heart always large and open. I hope, nevertheless, that my brethren will take heed that it may be so. But, whatever love may be shewn by a witness to the truth, it remains no less true that his faithfulness will always have the effect which I have pointed out.

If one wishes to do things “on a large scale,” of which the tract of Mr. Monsell expresses itself ambitious, then, in truth, we must recur to a totally different principle, to the one which the tract proclaims in these terms: “Take always the path where the least faith is needed.” For in order to have great numbers, forsooth it needs be, either that God act upon the masses themselves by a spirit of power, or that we should lower the demands of our walk to the measure of the great number, that is to say, to a very low measure of faith. That is the principle which Mr. Monsell avows and recommends. It is the foundation of his tract. For my part I can say that my principles have not changed. That which I published, when I was leaving nationalism, “on the nature and unity of the Church of Christ,” is still what satisfies me most of all that has appeared on this subject, and it is

totally opposed to the principles of union announced by Mr. Monsell.

To return to the history of brethren, all the story which Mr. Monsell makes up of the connection between the little flocks is but the product of his own imagination.

It was I who suggested the work of evangelization which was called the Home Mission, although it is true, when the work was once set going, that the national minister (to whom Mr. M. makes allusion) took a much larger part in it than I did, through the energy of his character. To avoid struggles with the Anglican clergy, he had begun missionary meetings, and I succeeded in turning them into preaching. There was no committee. When the work extended, he went, unknown to me, to entrust it to the ministers of the National Church, binding himself to put the laity aside, expecting that my interest in the work and the large-heartedness I had shewn would lead me to remain in it. I refused to do so; and shortly after the bishops and ministers counted the work of little value, and the evangelization drooped. Thanks be to God, the energy is renewed in the midst of brethren.

The mission of Tinnevelly never was, as Mr. M. declares, in the hands of brethren. Mr. Rhenius, who was wonderfully blessed there, Mr. Schmidt, and, if I am not mistaken, two other missionaries withdrew themselves from the yoke of the Anglican Church, because obedience to ordination according to the Anglican liturgy, and other like things, was imposed on them. That awoke a marked interest amongst brethren, and it was natural. The grief which Mr. Rhenius underwent in consequence of the conduct of the Anglican Society

brought on his death, and the Mission again returned into the sphere of the Society.

We shall find, towards the end of this tract, the history of that which Mr. M. calls the Plymouth schism.

It is not necessary to follow farther the history of brethren which Mr. M. gives, in the midst of whom he did not enter till seven years after the beginning of the work.

I do not contest the point, that in Congregationalism there was at first liberty of ministry, but that had scarcely any duration. That liberty has existed and still exists among Quakers; but whilst admitting the liberty of ministry, the work of the brethren rests on much broader foundations. While taking as a foundation the great truths of the gospel, here are the principles which distinguish it: the unity of the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit come down from above, the witness of a perfect redemption, accomplished by Him who is seated there at the right hand of the Father. It is by reason of the presence of this Spirit, acting in the members, that there is liberty of ministry according to the measure of His energy and of His gifts (a liberty regulated by the word).

This is the first principle (a principle of which Mr. M. will not recognize even the existence, as I will shew). It is on this foundation78 that we meet, admitting in consequence every Christian.

The energy of the testimony rendered to the second advent of the Lord Jesus has in practice distinguished brethren. The work has been the result of an energy which came from God; and certainly the knowledge of the revelation of God in His word increased by that

means. Practical faithfulness in renouncing the world is, perhaps, that which has most marked it. The knowledge of the word, I am persuaded, has been a consequence of it. But the two principles just pointed out have particularly distinguished the work. Perhaps we should rather say that the things Which have distinguished it have been the study of the ways of God in His word in every respect, complete separation from the world, and free and active evangelization.

What Mr. M. says (p. 27, art. 6) is not exact: examination of this can be made when we consider the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

As to the article 8, p. 28, to say that the Plymouth brethren (a name, moreover, which I do not accept) have a special mission to call on the faithful to leave their different denominations, etc., is to advance a statement devoid of foundation. Mr. Irving said the contrary; and he considered the fact that we did not seek to draw the world to us, as a proof that we were not in the truth. To seek the world is, I am persuaded, a false path. Besides, the walk which I follow is a walk of faith; and if any one has not faith which compels him to follow it, he would do better to remain quiet. But it is always true that the power of a new truth detaches those who embrace it from the system which rejects it. That is what has happened in England and Switzerland.

No more is there any ground to say (art. 9) that our “new foundation” is “that of testimony against the apostasy.” Let us remember that Mr. M. himself admits the apostasy; and he feels that he cannot act on souls without admitting it. If then there is an apostasy, or “universal disorder,” it is clear that those who come out

of that disorder, and who meet outside that state of things, are on a foundation which by the very fact of their meeting renders testimony against that disorder; but it is not the testimony rendered against that disorder which is the foundation on which they meet.

As regards the ecclesiastical organization, we will refer to it farther on. I will allow myself here one observation. As to the reader who has some taste of the things of God, can he run through the articles in which Mr. M. has depicted that which he calls Plymouthism, and the principles which Plymouthism has put forward, and believe that the absence of organization is what distinguishes it?

However biting that which Mr. M. has said of it may be, it will do us, with upright souls, more good than harm. He has also answered for us the “Examination” of a minister of Neufchatel, shewing that elder and pastor are two different things, and bringing out the difference between the ministry and charges, as well as between gifts and charges, with more clearness than I had done. Finally, he has completely overturned the new Genevese system, shewing it to be clearly anti-scriptural, by a deduction drawn from a string of passages, a deduction which I will sum up in Mr. M.’s own words: “I then regard all nominations of ministers of the word as an infringement on divine order.”79

Chapter 3.

This brings us to a grave matter, and one worthy of the serious attention of Christians.

Whilst developing, with much clearness and force, the proof of the doctrine which brethren profess, concerning

ministry and charges (except one point which I will notice farther on), Mr. M., in order to give weight to his right to establish a system and to bring brethren into it, lays as a foundation the denial of what is much more essential than the liberty of ministry itself, of that which alone gives any value to that truth. He employs the truth about the ministry (truth which souls taste more and more) in order to deny that which is much more important—the true unity of the Church, and in order to justify the sects and the endless subdivisions of the Church under the influence of some principle, whatever it may be; and to gain his end, he effaces the boundaries of good and evil, and saps the foundation of Christian faithfulness.

It is the moral character of his tract, it is the absence of all trace of the influence of the Spirit of God, which touches me most deeply (for I have known Mr. M. well), but one would not fail to accuse me of prejudice if I insisted on that; and this tract has made me greatly doubt as to his faith on the capital point of the presence of the Holy Spirit. But I will occupy myself with the subjects I have pointed out.

And, first, Mr. M. denies, whilst he ignores the root of that truth, the unity of the Church of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit to produce that unity.

The unity of Christians, says he, consists in their participation of a common life.

If that is so, we can have unity without the existence of a body, and the unity of Christians exists without there being a body, being all the while scattered on the face of the earth without any union, and each one being left to

his own individuality. We can, if we meet each other, experience life and mutual affections, but no unity.

The word of God says, “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” 1 Cor. 12:13. But, for the object which Air. M. lays before himself, it is enough that unity be limited to common affections, and that divisions continue among Christians.

He says again, in speaking of Christians, “Their affections and common sympathies are the result of a life communicated to their souls by the Holy Spirit, which has made them partakers of the divine nature.”

So, that which he has in view is not the presence of the Holy Spirit, which makes of them one body. The author does not see Christians “builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit,” Eph. 2:22.

Mr. M. says again, “The intimate and hidden unity shews itself by a visible union” (these are indeed the terms on which the truth expresses itself; and nevertheless it is to reduce it, in that which follows, to some personal and individual feelings), “as the soul makes itself felt through the body and its organs!” And what is that unity, visible as the body is? “Taught by God to love one another, Christians love, as Christ, with a love that shews itself; imitators of God as His dear children, they walk80 in love.” All unity, that is to say, even visible unity, is the affection and conduct of the individual. It is to deceive oneself, it is to deceive souls in the most serious matters, thus to delude oneself with regard to the sense of the words employed by the Holy Spirit. Let the reader glance through the whole page, whence these quotations are taken, and he will there find the confirmation of what I have advanced.

Is this, then, unity manifested by a visible union? or is it merely employing the expression of a scriptural truth to turn aside a soul from the true force of that truth?

The effect of this is to draw persons away, without the soul perceiving it, from the thought of God on the subject of unity, whilst it supposes that it possesses that truth, because, in speaking to them of it, use has been made of the very terms meant to communicate it.

In the next page the system appears already.

“Each converted soul becomes a member of the universal Church.” What universal Church? of the body of Christ here below? By no means. Paul speaks “of the Ephesians, as members of the Church which has no limit as to place or as to time.” The converted soul is “associated with the spirits of just men made perfect; it cannot either do them service,” etc. Then we have a piece of nonsense, namely, that this “universal Church is divided into local churches, which are representatives and miniatures.” For by universal church the author makes us take in all believers of all ages, dead or alive, a church which has no limit as to place or time. And thus is set aside the idea of a church upon the earth, baptized by one Spirit to be one body; and that was the object in view, and attention was turned away from scriptural truth on this subject, and fixed on churches,81 which are the representatives of the universal church. In one word, the Church, such as the word shews it to us, is denied, in order to bring into prominence each flock as having the rights of the universal church, an expression and thought equally unknown to the word.

Let us listen again. “Union in Christ is then a moral work, destroying in proportion as it develops itself all

egotism and pride.” This has a very fine appearance; but read the Epistle to the Ephesians and 1 Corinthians 12, and you will see whether that which the author says has any reference to the thoughts expressed in the word of God.

The idea of a family is very sweet, and I am not opposed to such affections, for we are brethren; but that is not the thought of the word on the subject of the unity of the Church. “We are all one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.”

If the words of men take from me the truth of God, the sweeter they are, they are the worse, and more deceitful.

Now then you will understand, reader, what this language means: union in Christ manifested in the Church by means of local churches. Union is a moral work in the individual. Manifested in the Church means acting in individuals, so far as their souls belong to the universal church, and that, in affections and common sympathies between the Christians of one locality.

Well, I do not hesitate to say that it is immoral thus to employ such expressions in order to delude others on subjects of which the word of God speaks, by the apparent use of the terms it employs. What I call immoral is to make use of gracious and sentimental words to lead the heart of Christians to attach a meaning to words which are used to express Christian truths, for the very purpose of excluding those truths by letting the deluded soul think that it is in possession of all that scripture teaches by these words. Take up the pages of Mr. M. and see if the expressions of union in Christ, of union manifested in the Church, or even of

local churches, have in them the same meaning which the infinitely precious truths have which these words contain if we consult the word.

I pursue my subject. We have seen the ideas which are set up to prepare minds to receive the system. Now we will look at the system itself. I accuse this system of a denial of the unity of the Church and of the presence of the Holy Spirit who has created it.

“The unity of Israel manifested itself in the assembly of a whole people surrounding the one altar. Let this people be scattered or even the altar defiled, for the moment all is lost. Our unity, the symbol of which is not one candlestick, but seven, is less massive and more diversified. The temple has not been replaced by another building, but by numerous tents which collectively form one camp.” He quotes Exodus 25:31; Zechariah 4:2; Revelation 1:12, 13, 20. Thus the author puts entirely aside, from one end to the other, the doctrine of the epistles on the subject; and the epistles are that part of the word which reveals the direct relationship between the Father, and Christ as Head of the body, with the Church, and which speaks of it. To introduce this part of the word would be to overthrow from top to bottom the author’s system. Pay attention to that which he says, namely, that what replaces the temple is not another edifice but many tents. It is not saying that Christ, whilst judging it, bears with such a state of things; it is pretending to say what God would have done to replace the temple. Now I beg my reader to take, not the symbols of the Apocalypse (where a good number of Christians see a prophetic history of the successive states of the Church on the earth, and which, if it is not so, present to us seven local churches,82

which gave an opportunity for judging the moral state of every church and even of every soul) to search in its prophecies what the Church is, putting aside all the teaching of the epistles; but to take the direct and positive revelation of those epistles, and to see there if that which God has announced to him is not the Church as the body of Christ, one on the earth by the baptism of the Holy Spirit come down from heaven. We by no means deny local churches. Mr. M. gets rid of them, as we shall see. The word maintains also die local unity.

Mark also that in the Apocalypse the Lord is not presented to us in the position in which the epistles reveal Him to us. The epistles tell us of Jesus gone on high, Head of a body and communicating power and grace to that body. In the Apocalypse we do not even see Jesus in His character of Son over His own house. He there presents Himself as judging, a priestly judge it may be, but as Son of man, Judge in the midst of the churches. There is no question at all of union with Christ. Now all this precious truth of the actual union of Christ with His Church, as well as that of His members one with another by the Holy Spirit, is set aside in order that souls may content themselves with that which none dare justify (that is to say, the actual state of Christians).

The meaning of the work of Mr. M. comes to this: Do not look too much at that ideal beauty; do not fill your head with that which the word speaks of, and I will present something to you which will do well, for we cannot have things on earth as they ought to be. We must find a walk in which we need the smallest possible amount of faith.

Christians! are you content with that?

Besides, Mr. M. lays down in principle that which I maintained in my argument with our brother Rochat, now at rest. “We are,” says he, “members of the universal83 Church and of the local church by the very fact of our Christianity.”

Immediately after that, Mr. M. gives us a justification of sects, and an apology for the destruction of local unity, which he holds as of slight account, just as he has put aside the body of Christ. “Let this manifestation,” says he, “be made by a single faithful assembly, or by many assemblies having different surnames, but having full liberty of mutual communion as a body, it comes to the same thing. That church or aggregate of those churches forms the manifestation of the Church of God in that place.”

Now I ask, if the word of God furnishes us with a trace of anything like this, and if it is not very positively condemned as a carnal thing? If one says, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos (that is to say, if there are different surnames), no matter: according to Mr. M. that comes to the same thing. But what says the word? “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Greek nor Barbarian; we are all one in Jesus Christ.”

Farther on, the author excludes again the presence of the Holy Ghost, in order to make the union to rest on a state of soul. “I am,” says he, “attached to my brethren by the work of God in them and in me… I submit myself to the laws and to the spirit of a society established by the Lord Jesus.”

What a difference between this language and that of the word of God! “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” “Now hath God set the members

every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." "Now are they many members, yet but one body." "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body."

And here, dear reader, give your attention to this. It is sought to establish a distinction between the gifts of the day of Pentecost and the Holy Spirit the Comforter, of whom the Apostle John speaks; and Mr. M. avails himself of the words of Peter, "That which you now see and hear," in order to contrast them with the words of the Lord, "Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not," for the purpose of making a distinction between the Spirit such as we have it, as the Spirit of grace, and the Spirit as it was with the disciples.84 Now what was promised by Jesus was the Comforter, whom, when on high, He would ask of the Father, and whom, from on high, He would send to His own.85 After the resurrection, He told the disciples to wait at Jerusalem the fulfilment of "the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard from me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." (Compare Matthew 3:11.) Now they had heard from Jesus the promise of the Comforter which the Father would send; John 16. On the day of Pentecost Peter says, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear" Acts 2:32, 33. Now, it is by this very Spirit, the promise of the Father, of which Jesus spoke (John 14, 15, 16), that we all are baptized to be one body. And the words "Ye now see and hear," in the mouth of Peter, say nothing of what Mr. M. speaks

of. The tongues, etc., were “the manifestation of the Spirit”; and it was that which the world saw and heard.

Now I ask, if the Holy Spirit produces in us good works; and I find that it is written, “That they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” And I say, Would it be in accordance with, the Spirit and the word to say, Ah! that cannot be the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of grace and as the Comforter, because the world does not see Him. We are the epistle of Christ, written by the Spirit of the living God, known and read by all the world. Is this again not the promise of the Father? And again: the Comforter would speak in them, and would shew to them things to come. Was the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which did that, totally distinct from that indwelling which made Him to be a Spirit of grace?

I fully admit the difference between the graces and the gifts; but I do not admit it to put aside that baptism which makes the unity of the body—a mould in which the Christian affections are formed according to the word, or to make these affections to be simply gracious feelings.

In speaking of ministry, Mr. Monsell could very well quote the most striking passages which relate to the body of Christ, and so he seems not to neglect them. Why then put them aside when the question is concerning the union of the members?

Mr. M. says again, “The Church, being composed of men, is a human society.”

Is it thus that the word speaks of it? The Church is not solely composed of men. It has for its Head, Christ; and the Holy Spirit is there, and He it is who makes its unity;

so that to say it is a human society is to make an allegation which totally falsifies the idea which God gives of it.

Are the bonds of this society human? Is that which makes it a society human? By no means. That which makes it a society is the Holy Spirit. This assertion of Mr. M., that the Church is a human society, betrays plainly the exclusion of the Holy Spirit from his system on the Church. For if the presence of God forms this society, to say, because men are in it, that the society is a human one, is to put man above God; and it is to make that which is the object of the senses prevail over the presence of Him who is the object of faith alone—a presence which, for faith, characterizes this society—a presence without which it has no existence.

Mr. M. says, “The members of the faithful churches have before them the ideal of the Church, of the heavenly families on the earth.”86 A very nice thought it may be. But I appeal to the Epistle to the Ephesians; to that to Romans, chapter 12; to 1 Corinthians 12; to 1 Timothy 3:15; and I say, that this description of yours is not at all the ideal of the Church according to the word.

In refuting a thought of the “Coup d’æil,” Mr. M. thus expresses himself: “To say that the Church is become quite invisible, is to say that the world can no longer perceive that there are Christians.”87 Here all idea of unity and of union according to the word is totally destroyed. The Church is made no more than a moral state of the individuals—that it was not the gathering together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad.

Is the Church then no longer visible? asks Mr. M. “Yes,” says he. “It is to be seen in all those who profess and know the Saviour.”88 This is to say that the existence of scattered individuals is the manifestation of a body.

But Mr. M. goes farther. “The apostolic church,” says he, “was visible solely because it shewed forth the virtues of the Saviour; and, now too, there are souls, who, in a feeble measure, are the witnesses of Christ. Why not call the same things by the same name, in the past as well as in the nineteenth century?”

This is a formal denial of all the doctrine of the word. Did God put apostles in souls? Did He put gifts of healing in a soul? You may exclaim, if you will, You take up things in such a way! Yes; I take things quietly, as I find them in the word, and I say that you put aside and deny the unity of the Church of God and all the doctrine of the word. Mr. M. says I confound Catholicism of form with the unity of the Spirit. Take the unity of a man; in what does it consist? I do not speak of uniformity of organization. I speak of the unity of the body. There is one Spirit and one body, one body on the earth; Eph. 4. Your unity of the spirit89 consists only in some good feelings in individuals. It is not that of which the word tells us. It tells us of being builded together for an habitation of God by the Spirit. And for empty words I will not consent to give up the word of my God, and the body of which Christ is the Head.

I have not taken, in the tract of Mr. M. one isolated passage, the sense of which one might be in danger of wresting. I have reproduced a crowd of passages from his tract, which shew that he denies, and that the object of his labour is to deny, the doctrine of the word on the

subject of the unity of the Church, of the body of Christ. He denies it in a clever manner, I allow. And in order not to have the appearance of putting aside the passages of the word which teach this truth, he quotes them, but for another purpose—that of explaining the gifts of ministry. But he carefully denies the truth with which we have been occupied. The object of Mr. M. is to accept and justify the actual subdivision of the Church.

After many pages, in which Mr. M. seeks to justify denominations, and in which he attacks severely those who call them sects, and that with justice, insomuch as they have for their foundation a particular opinion, he says, “I do not hide from myself that in saying that one must accept our present subdivision, I bind myself implicitly to accept new subdivisions.”90 Well, I can weep; I may feel myself incapable perhaps of repairing the evil; but I cannot accept sin before God, nor pledge myself to accept it at some later time.

Chapter 4.

I now come to ministry. I think that the work91 of Mr. Monsell on this subject may perhaps be of much use, and that so much the more, as emanating from an adversary.

He overthrows the system of our other adversaries with much clearness and logical consequence. As to elders, I think his work may be also very useful. I scarcely see anything except the point of the investiture of the elders, on which I have any remarks to make.

As regards elders, the imposition of hands is insisted on, election by the faithful or by a presbytery; and they are

not content with their practical existence, even when they are owned with thanksgiving before God.

Let us see what Mr. M. admits on these points, as the result of his study—a result at which I have arrived, and which the adversaries of brethren are one after the other forced to admit.

Mr. M. says on the subject of elders, “At most we can only guess that their installation was accompanied with the imposition of hands: finally, no positive measure was taken to render this institution permanent… The meaning of so marked an indifference is evident, when we remember that the fundamental corruption of Christianity was to be the transformation of these officers into an order of priests, resting its pretensions on apostolical succession.92 It is certain in effect that the word does not contain one word about the imposition of hands, so far as being laid on elders is concerned. What precious care is that which God takes of His Church, and that in all times! According to the customs of those times I have little doubt that hands were laid on the elders; but the Holy Ghost, who foresees everything, and who knows what He ought to say and what He ought to omit, carefully avoided stating it (and for my part I have no doubt that the reason given by Mr. M. is the true one, as also for that which concerns the virgin Mary). The Spirit of God, I say, avoided carefully giving a statement as to the imposition of hands on elders, in the inspired word, our one and only guide; and now, in contempt of His wisdom and goodness, men try to impose upon us the thing which God in His goodness, has taken care to pass over in silence, in that which He has preserved for us and handed down for the blessing of the Church in all times.

I do not insist on the strange consequence which Mr. M. draws, both from the fears of this abuse and from the determination which he has formed to have the imposition of hands, in order to keep up appearances for the flesh. “Take,” says he,93 “for ordaining, those who are the least esteemed in the Church.” And nevertheless, he would prefer it should be those who possessed its respect. It is nothing but the natural consequence of departing from the wisdom of the word; but I confine myself to insisting on the fact that imposition of hands on elders is nowhere found in the word.

“I think,” says also Mr. M.,94 “with one of the opponents of Mr. Darby, that the institutions of the Apostolical Church are not an absolute model. Therefore I do not insist on the establishment of elders as on a command of God.”

Hence Mr. M. does not try to shew a passage where the word declares that some must be established; at the same time he declares that nothing is said on the mode of their establishment. He even adds,95 “we know neither where, nor when, nor why, nor how this religious magistracy was established.” There is not the slightest allusion to an official source of this authority; he dares not insinuate that the people chose them.

Mr. M. touches upon the accusation made against him of establishing the democratic principle.96 His answer may be read: it is very insignificant. He agrees that he cannot “present as being of divine authority,” the system he wishes to establish. To present it as such, would be, he adds, “to deprive the bride of her privilege of ordering the house of God according to the wisdom He gives her

day by day, as directed by His Spirit and enjoying His fellowship … and were it not for the conviction which I have of the practical advantages of primitive episcopacy, I would adhere fully to these words (of Mr. Scherer): 'The meaning of the apostolic example is confined for us to a very general indication of the propriety or necessity of the direction of the Church by some of its members.'"

We see what place the word of God holds in these theories.

Mr. M. avoids all discussion on Acts 14:23. On the other hand, he admits that Titus was sent to Crete, not to recognize elders, but to establish them there.97 This is to allow that, in the only case where we find in the word anything precise, it is the apostles and their delegates who alone establish, an important principle where gifts are not in question. And here is the reason: Christ is "Son over his own house." Authority comes from Him, and the bride cannot confer it. It is not a question (and on that we are agreed) of ministry, but of government, of authority, of oversight. Now Christ alone is Head, as the man is of the woman. Christ not only gives gifts; He, further, established the twelve and that was a charge. Paul received his authority from Christ. He commits a charge to Timothy who had been designated by prophecies; he leaves Titus in Crete to establish elders. These are not merely isolated facts, but a chain of facts, which flow from the principle that authority belongs to Christ, and that Christ is "Son over his own house."

Now Mr. M. confesses that there is a "universal disorder"— "apostasy" — "the very strongest thing that can be said in any language."98 He confesses that nothing has been said of the permanence of this

institution of elders; that this silence of the word is intentional, because this institution was to become the great corruption of the Church, as it has become in truth. And mark this, that there is a parcelling out of the Church, and that, in consequence, if one pretends to establish elders, they will be elders, not of the flock of God, but of a little sect which must have taken from its own bosom persons such as it has been able to find there. Such elders can in nowise answer to that which we have in Acts. It cannot be said to them, “to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” — “all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.”

Is nothing more told us then in the word of God on the subject of elders and of the guidance of the flock?

Let us examine again the tract of Mr. M.

We read there,99 “The silent establishment of elders, whose existence is revealed to us only incidentally, is a proof of the small importance attached to these things.”

That is to say, that elders held their office without our finding any indication of their official establishment. This is the more easy to understand, as Peter, writing to the Jews of the dispersion, shews us that the idea he had of an elder was not at all that of a man officially established. He, himself an elder, wrote to those amongst them who were elders, and he adds (1 Pet. 5:5), “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder.” It is exactly that which would be equivalent to the expression of a president by seniority in age. He contrasts the younger and the elder (neoteroi, presbuterois). That is to say, we have the certainty that Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, did not use the

word “elder” to indicate men officially established, but men to whom their age, and the experience which accompanied it, gave a moral weight in contrast with younger men. And it is precisely in this way that the elders at Jerusalem are presented in Acts 15.

As Mr. M. acknowledges,100 we have no proof that there were elders at Antioch. And he adds, “Six years after the introduction of the gospel at Corinth, the church appears not to have had as yet any more formal government than the moral influence of those who devoted themselves to the work of the Lord; 1 Cor. 16:15, 16. The following year the isolated church at Rome was, to all appearance, in the same situation. The leadership was then still as the exercise of a gift (Rom. 12:8) without having become a regular charge.” He says again,101 “Those who had spoken to the flock the word of God, were by right its leaders,” Heb. 13:7.

That is to say, we have a crowd of passages which shew us very clearly the position of an elder, leader, and president, as founded on his moral weight and on the gifts, without nomination or official establishment. To those which Mr. M. quotes I would add 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13: “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.”

We have then in the word of God a position recognized without controversy, and valid without any other question, wherever it is found.102 Whilst we fully admit that this was apostolic experience, and that the system of official elders was only established at the end of about thirty years, Mr. Monsell blames us for wishing to go

over this experience again.103 He tell us that in proportion to the growth of the evil, this system was “laid as a necessity on the apostle,” particularly on Paul. For my part, I do not oppose this idea, although it appears that even at the beginning Paul established elders; Acts 14. But admitting this, what does this fact shew? It shews that in proportion as the evil was increasing, and at the same time the desire of glorifying the Lord, love and interest for the things of Christ, were diminishing, it became necessary that certain persons should be possessed with an authority, which, resting on an investiture which none would dare dispute, might impose silence on every disobedient soul. And thus it is that we find apostles who establish; a Titus who is expressly sent to do so; a Timothy who might be called to receive accusations against elders; but all here depends on the fact that the source of the authority is incontestable. Such was indeed the case with the apostles, and with those who in case of need might appeal to the epistles to Titus and Timothy.

But all does not end thus.

“In proportion,” says Mr. M.,104 “that death laid hold on the Church, the elders exclusively arrogated teaching to themselves,105 and ministry was confounded with office. When they had become a corporation, the ambition of power shewed itself among them (a universal rule of corporations): the members of the clergy compared themselves to the priests of the Old Testament, and their functions to all that was already most honoured amongst men—hence the word “sacrament.” Then came in salvation by means of ceremonies and forgiveness of sins by priests.”106 I do not carry out this picture farther. Mr. M. tells us that we

do wrong to go farther back than the state of youth of the Philippian church, to the childhood of that of Thessalonica and Corinth. But this is not the question. Infancy and youth are long gone by; and now the question is to know if, in this decrepit state of corrupted old age, of which he gives us the picture, we can return to youth, and do that which the apostles did by the authority of Christ, to bridle the will of man by a recognized authority, and recognized because it flowed incontestably from the authority of Christ over His own house, and because according to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit it answered to that which such a position demands. All depends here on the incontestable authority of the Establisher.

On the other hand, we find that in fact the word of God invests morally with its authority, that is to say, with the authority of God, those who, without having been, in the same way, officially established, can, if God raises them up, act on this ground according to their capacity, wherever they may be found, were it even in the midst of a dozen brethren gathered together.

Well! we have recognized the goodness of God in that, without pretending to appoint elders with an authority which shuts the mouth of the refractory by the very fact of their nomination, as the apostles did, to whom Christ had entrusted the rod in the Church. Who will do so now?

If you appoint elders, and if I dispute their authority, you can only maintain it on the footing of moral authority, which will shew, that it is the flesh in me that disputes it. You are, in spite of yourself, on the same footing as I am,

unless your act be the fruit of a sect and that you make it a condition of entrance into the flock.

But in reality, as to the care of which we speak, is it found amongst the brethren? It is possible that they have not known how to profit by it everywhere as they ought. But let us leave Mr. M. to speak on this point: “In Switzerland,” says he, “and in English towns, the lead falls to those who put themselves in the van (oi proistamenoi), very often devoted, wise, and spiritual men.” And that is so true, that in his efforts to overthrow the flocks of Switzerland, and in the directions he gives to those who may be inclined to lend a hand to him to this end, he avows that he despairs of success with regard to the large churches: “these,” says he, “are led in general by a little knot107 of brethren, whose intellectual activity has enabled them to grasp these sacred theories.” Mr. M. hopes that the little churches of the villages108 will be less sheltered from his efforts.

I say nothing of all this part of Mr. M.’s tract, because I do not think that there is one single spiritual soul who does not judge its spirit. One can pardon and pray for the author. If there be any spiritual energy, people will be secured from all his attempts; if there be none, one is always, alas! the prey of such attacks. At least there is straightforwardness in warning us of what he desires to do. Whether it is God who has forced him to this or whether it be irritation, this is certain, that God intended to warn the brethren of it.

Mr. M. finds fault with us, because in the British Isles the guidance of the country assemblies is almost always in the hands of some great or small landowner in the neighbourhood.109 This is a thing I was ignorant of up

to this moment; and yet I have been there more than he has. That might easily happen. I can assure my reader that I have thought of it, and that I cannot remember one single example of that which Mr. M. says is nearly always the case, without bringing forward a single instance: and yet I know the work pretty well. For my part, I think that brethren might, or at least that the grace of God could, give more energy to this part of the work. It demands patience, self-denial, a subdued flesh, the consciousness that one is acting with Christ and an ardent desire for His glory in the Church. But, in truth, it is a work which brings its own reward with it. It is a joy, if it is also a toil, to watch that souls, dear to the Lord, may walk well before Him. If there be not this love and feeling of responsibility, one can only do harm in meddling with the office.

I should still have many remarks to offer on the arguments of Mr. M. but I shall not go farther into details on this subject.

To say that Titus was sent to Crete because the churches had not yet made for themselves bishops, is to wrest the word by adding to it one’s own inventions. If authority were not necessary to set right those things which remained unordered and to establish elders, why not write to the churches? To dispute the necessity of that authority, is to admit an argument or an insinuation which destroys itself.

I have never read the tract of Mr. Vermont. But the only thing which, in that part which Mr. M. quotes, has struck me as extraordinary, is the very thing which he adopts himself, whilst pitying “those poor brethren at Plymouth” for having such an idea, namely, to be

contented with separation if one does not agree. It is enough to compare the expression of his commiseration in page 58, with what he says in page 61. But I do not think that the dear brother who wrote “Mr. Vermont” pretends to render the brethren responsible for what may be there.

I think that Mr. M. is right in combating Mr. Beverly when he denies that the word “deacon” is employed officially. The first Epistle to Timothy, as it seems to me, leaves no doubt as regards this. But there would be no profit for any one in our dwelling here on all these details.

Chapter 5.

With regard to the “Friendly Divisions,” I must call attention to some principles enounced in the work which occupies us.

Mr. M.’s system is to recognize the division of the Church, and even further to subdivide it.

I pray the reader to remember that, according to Mr. M. the unity of the Spirit is only a community of feeling, which he puts in contrast with uniformity. The word of God speaks of the unity of the body of Christ. The practical spirit is called the bond of peace. This truth is set aside by Mr. M. There is indeed for him a universal Church; but Abraham is of it as much as we are, so that it has nothing in common with our actual duties.110 There are churches; but, at the same time, every division whatever, provided one is content therewith, possesses all the rights of the universal Church. These fractions may take what surnames they like; that changes nothing.

This system seems to me a system of sin, that is to say, it appears to me to sanction sin knowingly. The doctrine of the word is formally laid aside, and one may, with regard to these divisions, remain according to one's will in sin, provided that those who do it, be, whilst doing it, amiable towards one another, and that no hindrances be put in the way of those who do the same. Sanction us in sin, and we will leave you free to commit sin according to your will. Sin then, according to Mr. M. does not consist in acting against the will of God, but in doing it in a bad spirit, and in hindering others in doing it. The existence of evil being a necessity amongst men, we must put up with it. Not to be content with it, is only a generous but fatal idealism. To oppose sin engenders evil reports; what is essential is to pull together. The position is evil, without doubt; but the heart is good. This is the unity of the Spirit. Finally we must choose the road which demands the least degree of faith.

The reader shall judge for himself if I have exaggerated the principles enounced by Mr. M. I have given a summary of them and brought them together, that sound judgment may be formed on them. But the reader will find them all again in the extracts which I am going to communicate to him.

That one may be able to judge, I take for my point of departure the truth taught in the Epistle to the Ephesians: "There is one body and one Spirit." We are "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"—and 1 Corinthians 12: "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body."111 Mr. M. admits the facts. He is ignorant, at least I hope so, of the root of the truth.

Here is what he admits:

“The Christians of a given locality are members of the Church of that locality, by virtue of the word of God, and not of their own will.”

“All Christians, then, in every part of the earth, where there are any, are members of the same Church, whether they know it or not; for the Bible does not recognize any other division of the universal Church but that of place or time— that division, in a word, which renders communion of believers amongst themselves impossible.”112 I do not admit that the word of God recognizes members of a local church. This is a truth which Air. Rochat himself has recognized. We are members of the body of Christ, which is a perfectly different idea. I confine myself now to pointing it out, without dwelling upon it longer.

Mr. M. admits that the Bible does not recognize any other division than that of places.113That there are local churches (that is to say the gatherings of all the Christians of a place) is a truth which we all admit. I say then that, if Mr. M. recognizes others, he does it knowingly.

This is how he presents the principle of brethren on the subject:

“The meeting of all Christians as one single denomination is the only way of manifesting their unity in Christ.”114 Thus the reader clearly sees that Mr. M. here reduces carefully the scriptural idea of the unity of the body of Christ to the idea of being gathered in one single denomination. All this is very grave.

For myself, I would say, Christians are bound to respect this precious and capital truth established in the word,

namely, the unity of the Church which is the body of Christ. If they come short of this, they sin.

But, for the moment, let us be content with his way of expressing it.

Mr. M., farther on, gives us the following declaration: “Primitively Christendom consisted of one single denomination.”115 Always debasing the truth! This is Christendom. The idea of the Church is set aside, and with it the doctrine of the word of God as to the Church. But whatever may be the terms used, at least we have the frank avowal that brethren recognize what the word teaches. There existed at the beginning but one denomination. This is what is scriptural, and it is that which brethren seek. It is admitted that this no longer exists. Mr. M. adds: Mr. Darby declares that the unity which ought to exist, that the world might believe, exists no longer. And it is what Mr. M. does not deny, for he says,116 “The outward unity is no more.”

Here then is what I call speaking with knowledge of the matter; and I say, since it is so, let us recognize every Christian in the unity of the body of which he is a member; but let us never recognize the division which is not according to the word, since, as you allow, the Bible recognized no other division than that of time and place. These divisions, such as we find them, are a sin. They shew that men are carnal, that they walk as men. This is the language of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. What is Mr. M.’s answer to it?

“Truth descends from heaven into a world of darkness and falsehood. Idealism, blind instinct of what ought to be, ignores this darkness. A degrading empiricism, which only sees what exists, accepts it (that is, this

darkness). Christianity alone recognizes the hideous reality to oppose it."117 Passing over this idealism which he accuses us of, and the degrading empiricism which is content with sects such as they are, let us examine the happy medium proposed by the author.

"Let us remember that the Church of God could not remain in the dust of this earth without losing its primitive beauty and order."118 That is to say, that, man being wicked and spoiling that which God has placed in his hands in a perfect state, we must reconcile ourselves to it.

Let us remember here, that it is not a question of the darkness and falsehood of the natural state of man, on one hand, and on the other, of a Christianity which recognizes them and opposes them; but that the question is concerning a thing which God has established in the midst of this evil, and which He clothed with the beauty of its Head by the power of His Spirit— a thing the unity of which was to be a testimony in the midst of the evil. This thing is the Church of God. On the avowal of Mr. M. it has lost its primitive beauty and order.119 What is to be done? We must know it could not remain on earth without losing them. That may be true. Neither could man remain on earth without losing his primitive state. Is that a reason to be satisfied with it? Ought he, although unable to get out of it, to reconcile himself with a state so sorrowful? Now, I do not admit, as regards the Church, that it cannot get out of its state of disunion, because the Holy Ghost suffices to produce the unity which is the object of His presence; whereas the object of His presence in us, individually, is to mortify the flesh, to crucify it, but not to remove it.

But ought man to reconcile himself to his state, whatever it may be, so as to remain there and add to it more?

Here is Mr. M.'s answer:

"We must distinguish that which may be guilt in our hearts from that which is humbling and enfeebling in our position. To wish to do away at once with denominations, and to rank schism with material division, instead of ranking it with moral separation, is to fight against facts … is to deceive oneself in the direction of the employment of one's strength, and to expose oneself to fall into the sin of schism whilst one strives uselessly against the humiliation of ecclesiastical dispersion."120 Let us remember that the author tells us that the Bible does not recognize this division; but, he adds, it exists, and one struggles in vain: it is to fight against facts.

But ought I to recognize and accept this division since the Bible does not recognize it? Yes, according to Mr. M., it is a fact (that is to say, the sin is a fact), against which we must not fight. And that of which they accuse brethren, is fighting against this sin, not recognizing that which the Bible does not recognize. According to Mr. M. the evil lies in the bitterness which may be produced by the testimony rendered to misunderstood truth; and schism with him consists, not in material division, but in moral division. So then, accept the division which the word does not recognize, and agree with others to commit this sin, and all will go well!

That is exaggerating the thought of Mr. M., people will exclaim.

This you will soon see. Let us listen to him:

“I do not conceal,” says he,121 “that in saying that one must accept our present division, I bind myself implicitly to accept new divisions … if then you are convinced … make a trial of it; with this object form a distinct assembly … that liberty which you refuse to all, we allow to each.”

In his accusation against brethren, he says:122

“According to them, since every division into separate bodies springs from the sin of schism, in one way or another, they can only separate for the purpose of fulminating against each other; and yet they separate on slighter grounds than those who admit a friendly division!” The italics are Mr. M.’s.

As Mr. M. does not quote a single example of the fact which he imputes to us, I do not answer his accusation.

I believe, in effect, that every such dividing into separate bodies springs from the sin of schism, if that from which I separate is really the Church or is on the footing of the unity of the Church, even if there should be but a small number of persons.

But Mr. M. admits the “friendly divisions.” That is to say, he admits that souls are not exercised as to this, and agree to remain in a position which the word of God does not recognize; he admits that, because, being on earth, this sin must necessarily have come in.

I do not attack other Christians; I find that it is a bad system. But to recognize, admit, accept, that which the word does not recognize, I confess that I am not altogether come to this, and that I am not come to say that outward sin is nothing, if the heart is not in it.

It is going too far, you will say, to consider the thing thus.

This is what I read in Mr. M.’s tract:123

“The reminiscences of Babel are become the organs of the Holy Spirit.” It is, in effect, a special and magnificent token of the grace of God, What application does Mr. M. make of it? “May it be so still! The Church cannot begin its history again, and recover the unity which exists no more. All the efforts made to reunite Christians, in beginning by that which is outward, have only increased the bitterness of those differences124 which exist, or created additional sects. We cannot escape from our humiliation; but, by the grace of God, we can avoid the sin which has associated itself therewith. Let us be but of one heart and one soul; it little matters then that we are no longer one single denomination [that is to say, the thing which, according to Mr. M.’s own avowal, God has established, and which alone the Bible recognizes]. Grace has no need to overthrow the walls of separation, which it can rise above.”

This does not mean, have brotherly love towards every Christian, and receive him with open arms—language to which the heart should freely respond. It is to say, that we should remain in that which is contrary to the word of God, in outward sin, and that grace, without removing it, will rise above it!

And it is not the notion that, little by little, this division will cease: a false principle, because we are not to do evil that good may come. Nothing is more dangerous for the conscience, nor more destructive of all blessing, because this puts God aside.

The thought of Mr. M. is to accept the state which the word does not recognize, and then to expect blessing.

“No disunion,” says he,125 “can subsist before Him [the Holy Spirit]… Let the congregations of different faithful denominations [for multitudinist Christians must always remain outside126] be united in their Christian sympathies, as much as are the congregations of the same denomination; thus is the unity of the Spirit substituted for the uniformity of men.”

And as to the unity which God had established (the only one which the word recognizes) to speak of that is embittering. Let us leave it alone. It cannot be re-established here below. The Church of God was doomed to lose its primitive beauty and order. Is not this the exact meaning of Mr. M.’s expressions?

It is fatal idealism after all, if it be not generous; an idealism without conscience, which sets aside the word and shuns the humiliation of the conviction of sin.

And what is the argument by which Mr. M. sustains this principle?

God, in the plain of Shinar, judged the perverse and rebellious unity, which natural man was using to exalt himself against God, and to make himself a name, to the end that there should be no dispersion. The diversity of nations was and remains the result of this judgment of God. By the presence of His Spirit on earth, God has established a precious unity. Man, by his sin, has destroyed it; divisions and sects have taken the place of that unity. Let us place, according to Mr. M., the result of the judgment of God on a level with the sin of man, and let us keep both, as being equally His will. For what is the history of which Mr. M. speaks? By His power

Jehovah confounded the folly of man; and the diversity, the confusion of tongues, which stamped upon it the name of Babel, recalls the judgment of God. The Holy Ghost finds men in this state. For a long period, one race alone worshipped Jehovah, the praises of whom rose up to Him in one language only, praises limited even by the restriction of the blessing which united round an earthly temple, a people who were not allowed to penetrate the veil, which hid their God from them. A perfect and eternal redemption has been accomplished, and the love of God flows out on every side, embraces all races of men, calls them to worship in the heavenly sanctuary, where the glory is manifested in the Person of Jesus with unveiled face, where the love of the Father does not hide itself, where it attracts and reveals itself. The Holy Ghost comes down to bear witness of it. He addresses Himself to all in all tongues. Grace adapts itself to man, to his heart as it is, by putting over and going beyond the barriers of legal ordinances. Lovely spectacle, in truth! Touching testimony of the heart of our God! A testimony which spoke a language that told everything to all. In the very effects of His judgments God finds the opportunity for the exercise of His grace.

But God did not stop there. The effect is stated in His word. In the sanctuary of God, in Christ, in the Church, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, nor bond nor free, nor Scythian nor barbarian. All are one. Providence has not changed the outward state of man. By the power of the Holy Ghost grace has united the redeemed in one body. The Church on earth is the result, in unity, of the presence of the Holy Ghost, which gathers together the redeemed. Man, wicked and perverse, has dispersed by his selfishness those whom God had gathered together.

In other words, sin has done, as to the unity of God, that which the judgment of God had done as to the unity of man.

And they have the inconceivable boldness to bring these two things together, and to say, as regards the effect of sin, “Let it be so still!” Let the sin abide, in order that its results may become the organs of the Holy Ghost! And people have come to this.127 “Mankind,” says Mr. M. again, “have divided into many nations as Christendom into many churches. One common design, a providential design, shews itself, I think, in this double division.” “The evangelical communions, notwithstanding the scandal of their differences, present a living Christendom, enclosed in the nominal Church, as the Japhetic races offer, in the midst of fallen humanity, a type less degraded than the others.”

May God keep me from that philosophy in the things of God, in virtue of which one is taught to find in the patience of our God—who knows how to bring good out of evil—a justification of our sin; a philosophy which places the sad fruits of our sin, which has marred the work of God in its beauty and order, on a level with the judgment of God, which has confounded the insolence and perverse unity of man: which debases the grace, which has surmounted the barriers, which this just judgment had raised between men, and places it on a level with the perseverance of man in sin, a sin which subsists in the barriers and divisions, which man has established in the Church; a philosophy which casts back all this on Providence and which adds, “Let it still be so”; which, if we are not willing to accept this state of sin, calls it taking no account of that which God has already done; a philosophy, in fine, which says that sin

does not consist in the fact that there are two congregations, but in the jealousy which possesses them; that is to say, that the sin committed is nothing and that it is to the heart one must look.

Mr. M. will say that all Christians of the same locality cannot meet in a place too small to hold all. Do they form, then, in this case, different denominations? Come! let us be straightforward.

This is the summary of these sad pages.

“The differences of denomination will subsist then as the differences of tongues subsist; but divine grace may make them harmless by restoring to the Church the consciousness of its unity.”128 This is saying that the judgment of God and sin are one and the same thing, and that while always keeping sin, sin will be made harmless by the grace of God.

It is no wonder that with such principles, they make an attack on brethren. And, surely, whatever may have been the principles of our dissenting brethren, I cannot attribute to them such thoughts. And if even there were schism in theory, if even no one were admitted but on narrow views, and thus charity would suffer from it, this sin (schism) must be sought for where we look for all others, in the heart, not in theories. It is not a question of bearing with them, or non-intervention; sin is to be accepted and recognized. “In the present state of things, all Christians are forced to belong to sects in the ordinary sense of the word.”129 For Mr. M., the state of Christendom in general is, “everything well considered, below that of the Jews at the time of the Lord.” He is “ready to call their state ruin, apostasy, or by any other term that you may choose in any language.”130 “The

Gentiles have not continued."131 "Christendom is an army which no longer knows the voice of its Head; and Dissenters, as faithful soldiers, have quitted the ranks to place themselves under the order of Jesus…. Without doubt, it is a deplorable confusion." "When is it," he exclaims again, "that we shall learn all the extent of the universal disorder which surrounds us?"132 Mr. M. says that one might just as well look for sacrifice in paradise as to look for dissent in the apostolic churches: "For there is disorder in dissent—innocent disorder, become inevitable, in order to avoid culpable disorder. It is a violent remedy, and every serious remedy is a factitious evil inflicted to cure an illness still more serious."133 And what do these violent words lead to, a few lines further on—words which, like an overflowing torrent, overthrow everything, and even dissent itself? Look at this: "We should like … to walk under our banners and surround our Head; but, if that be no longer possible, let the letter perish provided the Spirit remains." The italics are Mr. M.'s.

For my part, I believe that to follow the Lord Jesus, does not prevent obedience to his word; and that, much to the contrary, it is the word which directs us in obedience by following it closely.

As to the comparison which Mr. M. makes of the relations between the churches, with those which subsisted between the tribes of Israel,134 my answer is short and easy. It is God who divided Israel into tribes, and it is sin which has made the divisions which Mr. M. calls churches, which call themselves denominations, a word which Mr. Beverley agrees with everybody to call sects. I do not recognize, then, these churches in any way, for the reason which Mr. M. himself gives for it,

namely, that the Bible recognizes no other division than that of time and place. Consequently, I have no altar135 to recognize. My altar is set up, not as a memorial, but for the enjoyment of that which God has established—the unity of the Church—an enjoyment, which, in His great grace, the Lord has connected with even two or three met in His name.

In the following words the system of this tract reveals, as regards the Christian walk, a looseness of principles, which alone would be enough to condemn it. “We have not always a choice between positive evil and positive good; on the contrary, it may often be pleasing to the Lord that we should accept, because of our relationship with others, that path which is not altogether the best. You at every step confound moral questions with questions of judgment; you think that to make every thing a matter of conscience is the way to do everything conscientiously.”136 I think that when the will of God is known, and on those points where it is known, we must needs follow it, and that then it cannot be a question of choice. I think that if, because of our relationship with others, one dispensed with doing the will of God, it would be to prefer man to God, it would be a sin produced by the fear of man. And although it is very important to remember that we are called to liberty, the liberty which Jesus gives us does not exempt us from seeking in all things the will of God; but it sets us free to do it, free in the accomplishment of it, because we love His will as well as the things He wills, being made partakers of the divine nature, which, in man, makes itself known by obedience, and by its affection for the things of the Spirit; the Holy Ghost Himself being the power which gives liberty in virtue of the redemption

accomplished by Jesus. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free.”

I will notice in passing that Mr. M. condemns in brethren137 that which he seeks to justify here in others, as regards the duty of seeking spiritual profit. There are besides, a crowd of these things which I have had no desire to take up.

In that which Mr. M. says, with the desire of turning away souls from the walk of faith, he shews a levity which is excessively painful; and which betrays the source of all this system. Here is an example: “If there had been a bridge over the Jordan, its waters would not have stopped to let Israel pass over dryshod.”138 I confess that such a way of speaking of the admirable ways of our God, the perfection of wisdom and goodness, is to me exceedingly repulsive. I keep away from principles and from a system which keep me, as it appears to me, far from God, and which have their origin in a spirit so at variance with Him; for near Him, there is not that want of reverence for His ways. I deplore it in any one I have known as I have known Mr. M.

Chapter 6.

Here is the sad root of the ways and of the system of Mr. M.:

“He,” says Mr. M.,139 “who knows the evil of his own heart, will always take the road where the least faith is needed” that is to say, where he is the least put to the test. Here again the italics are Mr. M.’s.

Is this the Christian walk?

Is he who would follow the road, “where he is put to the least test,” the one who follows the Lord Jesus?

This is easily understood, that none dare go beyond his faith, that the sense of our weakness would make us seek the grace of Jesus by faith, while distrusting ourselves. But to establish a system, and to settle one’s walk,140 so as to be as little put to the test as possible, is to avow, in a manner rather astounding, the intention of not following Christ closely. It is a path which the flesh will easily find out.

Yet I doubt that a person could find his own blessing there, and specially if he were a Christian, which I do not doubt Mr. M. is.

A word or two here will make Mr. M.’s object plain. The system which he believes to be biblical “is nowhere,” says he,141 “established.” It belongs “to the Church of the future.”142 However, he does not delude himself.

“Our Church of the future,” says he,143 will never do miracles, it will not attain to perfection, nor regenerate that part of the world within its reach; … and at its close we shall boast ourselves of it still less than at its beginning.” For the present, nevertheless, he rests on that which remains of old dissent. “Remember,” says he, 144 “that you have not, like us poor dissenters, the right, I do not say of justifying, but of explaining your fall,” etc.

However, that old dissent does not suit him, although he loves to avail himself of the remembrance of it.

“It is unquestionable,” says he,145 “that there was a narrow spirit amongst the dissenters of certain localities. Perhaps one does still demand too positively

the confession of a faith well established, and having the consciousness of itself." "We wish to open our arms to every soul for whom there is a good hope."

"Some years ago dissenters would have been stiff and not easily dealt with. Now we are humbled. We hold to nothing but the unity of brethren. As to the unlucky name of dissent, we like it as little as you do yourselves."146 Mr. M. here is addressing the scattered brethren who belong to the Church of the future, whose system is to admit, in consequence, "a wise elasticity of forms."147 As to the National Church, Mr. M. shews no mercy. It is "a deceitful beacon,"148 "a guide into the ditch,"149 where "all that is most sacred has been cleverly arranged in order to lull to sleep the worldly in a deceitful and deadly sleep." Its members accept the corruption of Christendom.

As regards the Free Church, there is some hope. But discipline! One lesson will do for it. The system which they have imagined in order to come to an agreement as to discipline, is, in Mr. M.'s judgment, "a subterfuge unworthy of those eminent minds and of those upright souls "of which it is composed. It is "an unheard of infringement on dogma" … "an odious and monstrous piece of inconsistency." "The supper of the Lord is left outside to be trodden under the feet of the Gentiles; the holy electoral urn is the centre round which its members assemble!"150 "In matters of interpretation, theologians, when in despair, are capable of anything."151 However there is hope. "These dear brethren bestir themselves in vain against themselves; their ecclesiastical system will melt away before their Christian sympathies.152 Doubtless the Free Church will preserve its distinct organization, and unfortunately

it will preserve its clergy too."153 "It is an infringement on divine order."154 Nevertheless one will rest satisfied. The Free Church "bears two infants in its bosom,"155 and one of them, "with its supper without meaning as regards communicants," will give way to the other. "Spontaneousness is a young and amiable dissent, too young as yet to account to itself for its origin, and besides caring little to bear that name."156 But one holds out the hand to it. "If an express and mature adhesion is enough to create the Christian family, dissenters will be fully satisfied. We can already hold out our hand to every assembly which desires to be a Christian family." If the present means for making a Christian family do not succeed, the Free Church will add "its veto."157 And indeed the Free Church has dissenting tendencies and necessities.

I do not know if the soft words of Mr. M. with his sharp lessons, would gain over the Free Church to his advances. I doubt if, such as it is, it will have any future. But there are some dear brethren in its bosom, for whom trials, and the teachings of God Himself, will open a way. Happy are we to have a future in Jesus, when the difficulties of the road are ended. I believe that the Christians of the Free Church have not begun their work on the foundation which God and His word have laid; but I gladly leave them individually in the hands of Him who is always faithful towards His own, loving them and caring for them as His own flesh. Men will make systems. Grace will cause souls to grow in Jesus. He it is who will bring hearts together, and it is neither ecclesiastical constitutions nor agreements which will bring about this result.

As to the “Plymouthists” Mr. M. makes them undergo the fate of National Churches. He gives, besides, directions or details in order to sow division amongst the flocks. One ought to remain there if one has a hope of warning the whole; but, if the principles are too deeply rooted for one to entertain the hope of destroying them, “it is a fretting leprosy in the house. Save yourselves from such a congregation as you would extricate yourself from the grasp of a drowning man.”158 “It is a perfidious enemy.”159 Finally, if my reader has a wish for it, he will find in Mr. M.’s tract160 instruction cleverly arranged, so as to divide the flocks, to scatter them, and to win over their numbers.

For my part, I have only one frank and sincere piece of advice to give to all those whom Mr. M. may address. It is this: If any one shares the sentiments of Mr. M. on the principles in question, and on the brethren who have embraced them, he will do well, and it will only be what is straightforward and honest, to leave indeed as quickly as he can. I can advise no one, not even with the object of winning others, “to be thus perpetually coasting so close to sin”; for in truth “evil communications corrupt good manners.” If you see in us “a fretting leprosy,” “a perfidious enemy”; if you believe that we have put before you inviting dishes “because poison is never given alone,”161 no, eat not of them. But do not pretend holding out to them a brotherly hand, to join the brethren unsuspectingly, whilst in secret you are entertaining such an opinion of them.

Chapter 7.

One word on Plymouth, since Mr. M. returns several times to the “schism of Plymouth,” although that has, for the purpose here, but a slight importance.

The brethren who, at Plymouth, had from the commencement devoted themselves to the work, as well as others who had helped in the oversight of the flock, met each week to take counsel together on all that concerned the welfare of the assembly, the reception of members, etc., and the work in general, communicating in detail to the flock all that which, in general, would interest them, and specially all the cases of public discipline, which demanded any public act on their part. The supper was open to every Christian; gifted brethren, whencesoever they might have come, partook of the supper as members of the body of Christ, and exercised freely as such their gifts. There was much blessing. There were also difficulties, for which God in His grace provided.

Mr. Newton, to make use of his own expression, for twelve years laboured, heart and soul, to bring in there the clerical system. He succeeded in breaking up the little meeting of which I spoke. He prevented brethren of other places from coming; and finally, when I resisted this, he declared, in the presence of some fifteen brethren met on this matter, that he sought to make Plymouth a centre, and to produce there, amongst those who were there, a union against the views of brethren; adding that he hoped to have under his influence, for this end, the assemblies of the three neighbouring counties.

It is clear that I could not agree to this.

Satan sought to overthrow the brethren. Without doubt there had been neglect, since this had thus crept in amongst them. But outside of a little circle of intimate friends, no one suspected it, until Mr. Newton thought himself strong enough to strike the intended blow. God, however, in His great grace, watched over His testimony and over His poor children who, without doubt, had failed therein. It is possible that, in the hard contest which I have had to go through, I have failed in different things; but, at bottom, I have nothing on my conscience. I asked for the re-establishment of the little meeting whereof I spoke. Finally, God brought out all into the fullest light: and a system of lies, of intrigues and blindness, the work of Satan—the like of which I have seen nowhere—was clearly manifested. The brethren in general having shewn firmness in this matter, God blessed this also; and it was discovered that Mr. Newton had, for a long time, secretly taught, concerning the Person of Christ, doctrines which overthrew the gospel; that for a long time, they had been circulated with his knowledge, by means of sisters whom he had gained over, who had positive orders to let nothing of it be seen by those who could judge of it, and who had a list of the persons to whom it was permitted to entrust the manuscripts which contained these doctrines.

Now Mr. Newton having put forth these doctrines in a reading meeting, they drew the attention of a brother, who, though he was quite under his influence, was nevertheless sound in the faith. He wrote on the subject to Mr. N. The latter answered him, justifying his doctrine, which he asked this brother to keep concealed, because, said he, there were saints who were not yet prepared to receive it.

Here is that doctrine: It is that Christ, born of Adam, is his descendant, so that the expression “made sinners “(Rom. 5:19) applied to Him; that is, that through His being descended from Adam, the head of the human family, Christ was constituted a sinner, and exposed to all the consequences of the state in which He found Himself; that He had to obtain life by observing the law; that through His faithfulness He extricated Himself from this state; that at the time of the baptism by John He ceased, from being under the law, to be under grace; that He had to find His way up to a point where God could meet Him, and that this was in death, in the death of the cross: that consequently, Jesus experienced the feelings which an elect man, yet unconverted, must have experienced, if he had a suitable sense of his position; and that Jesus experienced them, not as our substitute, but as associated by His birth with man and with Israel in the condition in which they were respectively.

When the very friends themselves of Mr. Newton told him, that if he did not retract such a doctrine, they would give up all intercourse with him, he withdrew the application which he had made of Romans 5:19 to the Lord Jesus, but expressly meanwhile maintaining all the rest of the doctrine up to this day. At least he maintained it still, when very lately I left England.

Thanks be to God, the brethren were delivered, and these doctrines repelled. Those of our brethren who acted at Plymouth in concert with Mr. N. were quite undeceived and delivered through the great grace of God. They confessed they had preached a false Christ; and they did this in such a manner as to give them a right to the full confidence of brethren. Some still followed Mr. Newton, and he built a chapel for their use.

But, despairing of exercising any action over brethren, he tried to gain some influence among the members of the National Church, and amongst the members of the Scotch Free Church in London. I am told that they also are beginning to be on their guard.

The brethren are not only delivered but strengthened. For, painful as it was, this sifting has been salutary to them. And it was needful; for worldliness had slipped into their midst, and at Plymouth it shewed itself boldly. All feel that a weight, for which no one could account, was removed. The field of labour is wider than ever; and I have never found so many doors widely open, nor so much blessing, as during my last stay in England. And (oh! the wondrous grace of God, which has greatly struck me) never, during all this painful time, has the gospel preaching, on the part of faithful brethren, been checked, and never, I believe, was it more blessed.

That all this has been very humbling, I allow, and brethren feel it; and I hope that, by the grace of God, they will feel it as I do myself. But God has strengthened the faith of many brethren; He has enlightened and strengthened them in their walk; He has made many of them intelligent, who only walked with brethren for the blessing which they found amongst them; He has brought out important truths, which were but little known; and brought into full light the devices of the enemy, of which one had no idea.

Such is, in a few words, the history of what is called the Plymouth schism—a painful lesson, but blessed.

This is the thing to which, unwittingly, I think, but by means of his false position, Mr. M. has put a hand.

My brother, for such I believe you to be, listen to me—you know I love you!

You are seeking, and it is not the first time, a sphere large enough to suit you, and you think that if ever the liberty of ministry is to be understood and accepted, “on a great scale,” it never will be by our means.162 As to a large sphere, faith would have given you one; for it has before it all the will of God, a vast field which His love has opened. There is, it is true, a field large enough, apparently, open to any who would walk in the path which requires the least degree of faith; but as to that path, it is too much frequented. You will meet there too many competitors; and, after all, you will be deceived. It is far better, while recognizing one’s weakness, to do nothing else than seek the will of God. Thus one is blessed, even when weak; blessed, even though man may curse. I pray for you.

Chapter 8.

It remains for me to touch upon a few points which connect themselves with the preceding.

We shall find that disbelief on the subject of the presence of the Holy Ghost—a disbelief which effaces the truth as regards the Church, destroys it also as regards the action of that Spirit in gifts and fruits of His grace.

“Ministry,” says Mr. M., “is of God.”163

Well! how does he understand this?

“Natural or acquired capacity,” he adds, “quickened and sanctified by the Spirit of truth, becomes fruit of grace from on high.”

That God, before placing therein the gift, prepares the vessel, by endowing it with natural or acquired qualities, this I believe. Paul was a vessel of election, prepared of God. The Master has given to those of His household, to each one “according to his several ability.” But to say that natural or acquired abilities become fruit of grace from on high, is nothing but rationalism refined in order to make an exclusive ministry.

Mr. M. says concerning the presence of the Holy Ghost Himself, things which shew a wish to weaken faith in His presence. As to the formula, which he attributes to us, 164 I have never heard of it. But to say, as he does, that the Holy Ghost “Himself dwells with the friend of Jesus,” is to betray, as to the presence of the Holy Ghost, very serious unbelief, of which the sequel of the passage only multiplies the proofs. “He dwelleth with you,” said the Lord, “and shall be in you.” Why omit one half of the Saviour’s declaration? And who is it who dwells with us and shall be in us? is it not the Comforter sent by the Father? It is, I think, the Holy Ghost in person. This is why he says to the Corinthians “know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you?” (1 Cor. 6:19). He is then a Person, I suppose. What then does this mean: “a real presence but not a personal presence”?165 And this unbelief betrays itself in a way still more serious, in what Mr. M. says a few lines farther on. “The one hundred-and-twenty tongues of fire… had not together… the value of the dove which John saw descending on the well-beloved Son.” Were then these one hundred-and-twenty tongues of fire really the Holy Ghost Himself?

And with what does this assertion connect itself?

“In Jesus alone dwells all the fullness”; “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” “The one hundred-and-twenty tongues of fire … had not the value of the dove,” etc.

Does Mr. M. think that this divine seal, put on Jesus as man “anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power,” when He took His place with His own and began His public career, is the same thing as “the fulness which dwells in him bodily”? Is it when the Holy Ghost descended on Him, that the fulness of His deity began?

And if that is not what it means, what connection is there between these things? Was it the personal presence of the Holy Ghost in Jesus which constituted in Him the fulness of the Deity? If not, the contrast which Mr. M. establishes on this point between Him and His disciples has no value.

Jesus as man was sealed by God the Father; but He was God manifested in the flesh, which is quite another thing. There is a difference in the manner of the presence of God. Christ was God incarnate. The Holy Ghost, even if we look on Him as God, only dwells in us. He does not become man so as to unite humanity to His Person. And, if we recognize the Holy Ghost as a Person and as God, what do these words mean: “the one hundred-and-twenty tongues of fire had not the value of the dove”?

This is true, that the manifestation of the Holy Ghost in Christ, who did not lift up “his voice in the streets,” was different from the manifestation of the Holy Ghost in the disciples, who were to proclaim abroad from the housetops what He said to them in the ear. Christ was more the object, the disciples were more the

messengers, of the faith which condemns the world which has rejected Jesus. But to speak of the comparative value of the Holy Ghost in Jesus and in His disciples is first of all to confound the Person of Jesus with the seal of the Holy Ghost; then it is to confound the Holy Ghost with the manifestations of His presence.

It is the Comforter, the Holy Ghost Himself, who came down on the day of Pentecost, and it is His presence which made Peter say, “thou hast not lied to men, but unto God.”

If we compare the effects of the presence of the Holy Ghost as a testimony, it is the contrary which is true. “He that believeth on me,” said Jesus, “… greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father,” John 14:12.

To say that the worth of Jesus was greater than that of His disciples is nonsense. One cannot compare God and His creatures, nor the Son of God with those who are His, however blessed they may be. This is evident. To compare the Holy Ghost manifested in one way, with the Holy Ghost manifested in another way, is unbelief as to His divine Person.

I do not say (and I indeed hope that it is not so) that Mr. M. has abandoned orthodoxy. But the page of his tract, with which we have just been occupied, betrays certainly a very serious rationalism, the fruit of philosophy. It betrays a practical unbelief which is enough to account for the general bearing of this tract, and which shews itself to the attentive reader in many places. So again, in these words: “when the apostle says that the children of God are led by His Spirit (Rom. 8:14), this has solely reference to faith and holiness in

the affections and in life." The influence of the Holy Ghost doubtless manifests itself in these things; but that which is on the mind of the apostle is not the influence of the Spirit only, but the Spirit Himself; that which is on the mind of Mr. M. is a state of soul; in Romans 8:16 the apostle says, "it is the same Spirit," or "the Spirit itself." And again, "the Spirit helpeth," "the Spirit maketh intercession," the Spirit "dwelleth" in us.

That the Irvingites said that there was more than one Immanuel, is a thing I never heard them accused of; and I have great doubts of it, however they have been deceived by the enemy. However that may be, we have not now to deal with them. But I pray my brethren to be well on their guard against that rationalistic unbelief, which the tract we are examining manifests concerning the presence of the Holy Ghost, and against the efforts which have for their object to substitute for the personal presence of the Holy Ghost in us, a real presence of the Spirit with us. All that this page contains seems to me extremely serious, and makes me more uneasy as regards Mr. M. than nearly all the rest of his tract. I do not know where he learnt these things; but I recognize there, in the expressions, in the use of the word, in the manner of quoting from it, as well as' in the doctrine, marks so evident of a work of the enemy, a work which I have seen elsewhere, that I confess it alarms me exceedingly. Does he think that the personal presence of the Holy Ghost only took place when He descended on Jesus? And, as we have already asked, is it to this that he applies the expression "the fulness of the Godhead"?

Whilst fully recognizing that it was the Holy Ghost in Person who descended on Jesus, it is certain that, generally speaking, the word of God shews the personal

coming of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, to be a result of the ascension of Jesus; that it was then that the Holy Ghost was personally sent from on high as that other Comforter, who was to abide with us for ever. Before that, the distinctive thing was the presence of the Son, without the possibility of separating the Father from Him (John 14:10), and the Holy Ghost (Matt. 12:28), as many passages shew. That which distinguishes the present time, since Pentecost, is the presence of the Holy Ghost, from whom we cannot separate the Father or the Son; John 14:23.

Is it thus then that Mr. M. has learnt only to see a "fulness in the testimony of the Holy Ghost to:the Christian's heart, which is unknown in the past dispensation"?166 Is this all? Has not the Comforter been sent from on high after the ascension of Jesus? Is it not said (John 7:39), that "the Holy Ghost was not yet [given]; because that Jesus was not yet glorified"? In nowise is it believed, that the faithful of the last dispensation were, as he accuses us of saying," strangers to the work of the Holy Ghost" or to divine life; but we believe that the Comforter was not yet given, as He was given when the work of Jesus had been finished. Does not the word of God say it?

One remark on the subject of the Lord's return.

Mr. M. says on this subject,167 "It was apparently Paul's expectation when he wrote the first of his epistles; but towards the close of his life, he reckoned he would die."

Were the thoughts of Paul changed, as if he had been wrong at first? By no means. He speaks of the Church's hope, which he shared, and he speaks of it in these words: "we" —at the end he awaited an immediate

martyrdom. He was “now” about to be poured out as a libation of the sacrifice. This makes no change in the doctrine, nor in the hope of faith.

A middle course in faith is infidelity in the heart.

There is a painful indifference to the word of God as a guide. In speaking of the choice and appointment of elders, this is how Mr. M. arranges the matter:168 “The brethren who had done the one, would be able, if needs be, to do the other also.” Is it thus that one is to dispose of the word according to our pleasure?

As to the doctrine of guilt, that which Mr. M. says of it169 amounts to this, namely, that the doctrine which teaches that all men are under the guilt under which Adam was, is an error; that is to say, he is, on this point, what is called an Arminian. The important thing to observe is the levity with which, as with the authority of a teacher, he treats traditional orthodoxy on the point as an error. What he says on Romans 5:14, viz., that the children of Adam are “far from being accounted guilty of having committed his sin,” has no connection with the question; because, as this passage says, they have not in fact committed that sin; but he says nothing of their state of guilt in the sight of God. But Romans 5:19 says positively that by the sin of Adam they were made sinners. Mr. M. criticizes on this occasion a quotation which I made from Amos 5:26, in the tract on “The State of the Church.” The Spirit of God says there that the Israehtes, guilty as a part of the whole, of the nation, and guilty of the whole of its sin, would bear the punishment of it in a captivity beyond Babylon. Now we must not lose sight of this, that in this part of the tract “The State of the Church,” it was a question not of the

eternal consequences of sin, but of the government of God with respect to Israel. Since this government of God deals with the Israelites as guilty, I think therefore He regarded them as such. Joshua and Caleb have nothing in common with this, for there is no question of the faithful, who by the way suffer the consequences of the sin of others, as sharing the lot of the people; the question was as to the unbelieving who, ratifying the sin and unbelief of their fathers, bear the punishment of it, after acting like their fathers or even yet worse.

I will not take up with a view to answering it, a very ridiculous prediction of Mr. M.170 concerning what is to happen to brethren. I only touch on it for the purpose of explaining a principle which is connected with it.

It is said in “Le Témoignage”:171

“When corruption has affected a thing which God had made for blessing, He rejects it; or He replaces it by bringing in something else.” Mr. M. speaks of this “something else” as if we made it to be “that which should replace the Christian churches in the struggle against evil.”

Where did he find that? Every one knows that what brethren believe, is that all the system which exists is in a state of failure, and that it will be laid aside; first, morally, by its own apostasy; then by the judgment of God, who will replace, by the presence of Jesus Himself, the testimony which men failed to render to Him. That there is to be in the course of time a testimony among the Jews is what I believe. But it is not necessary that I should here enter into these details. I only desire to hinder ridicule being cast on an important truth by the false manner in which it has been represented.

Chapter 9.

I have finished my task—a task which has been very painful to me; not because I differ from Mr. M. on the subject of elders, a difference which is to me comparatively of little importance: but painful because the principles on which he founds his arguments seem to me immoral; not immoral in the sense of that gross immorality which scandalizes the natural conscience, but in this sense, that they give a false turn to the relations of things to God; not that they undermine the flocks, but that they efface the limits and marks of good and evil, and remove the boundaries of eternal truth.

It is important that, whatever opinion they may hold, brethren should be on their guard against such principles.

The question is about something very distinct from a sect of Plymouthists.

My deep conviction is—and I warn my brethren as to it—that, whether through the wish to subvert certain doctrines, or through worldliness, rationalism is creeping at this moment into the ranks of those who, after having left nationalism, are not willing to walk according to the simplicity of the word of God. The journal “La Reformation,” and the tract of Mr. M. shew this very clearly.

We all know, that for a long time since Mr. M. has been making war against brethren as it laid in his power; so that his tract did not take me by surprise, nor has it surprised, I think, anyone else; but I was not aware of the degree to which he had come down as regards his faith and his principles. The descent of the way on which he walks is rapid. Once in movement, the rapidity of the

descent increases at each step. Mr. M. avows, alas! that he will not take the path of faith. His pamphlet will have confirmed in their walk those who have faith.

The allusion which he makes to certain German scholars explains perhaps the sad progress which he has made in the path of that infidelity which clothes itself with philosophical vagueness. I know not.

What I do know is, that his pamphlet has caused me deep sorrow. He does not perceive in the least what he hast lost. It matters little to have true principles about ministry and about any other such things, if living and real faith in the power and presence of our God by His Spirit be wanting to us.

It behoves us to be prudent. That prudence which the fear of the Lord gives and subjection to the word are sufficient against the traps and devices of the adversary. The rule of the Christian is “wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.”

Brethren, young and old, are called on to pay attention to this. They will do well to profit by the reproaches of Mr. M. whatever may be the evil source from which they may have passed into his work. But I should prefer to undergo some reproaches, even deserved, in the path of faith, than to avoid all blame in the paths of infidelity.

Would to God I had more energy to run such a risk oftener!

72 Geneva; Kaufmann. 1849.

73 In the Canton of Neuchatel, brethren have no need of our telling them who desired to put fetters on the work of evangelization, which God has blessed in spite of all. And I think that the brethren of the Canton of Vaud are

able to say whether the brethren who visited them, and who have laboured in the midst of them, are “perfidious enemies who have brought poison to them.” If they have found them such, it would be useless for me to repeat that they are not so; and, in effect, those who think so would do well to separate themselves from them. I only exhort them, contrary to what Mr. Monsell counsels them, to do it without waiting for anything.

74 He has even given the programme of his system which, in the main, is, as it seems to me, nothing but the old dissenting system, in preserving even the two shades of difference of Mr. F. Olivier and Mr. Rochat. He builds, however, on the system of Mr. Olivier, only admitting the system of Mr. Rochat in a subordinate manner, and by the side of the other, and by paying his court to what he calls the new and amiable dissent of the Free Church (although it has not the veto of the church, the only safeguard against the entrance of the unconverted, and although there be clergy in it). It is all one. “The friendly division” is even a means fully admitted (pp. 60, 61) in order to reach the desired end. The proposed system accepts it, provided that no one is friendly with the “gnawing leprosy” of Brethren.

75 Page 96, of Mr. Monsell’s tract.

76 Pages 125, 126.

77 Page 104.

78 The fact is, that we met by the power of grace, according to the liberty of the Spirit of God, with no settled system; but at bottom, it is that which I have just pointed out, which served as the principle of meeting. The first time was at Dublin; we were four brethren.

79 Page 144.

80 The italics are Mr. M.'s.

81 We shall see farther on that Mr. Monsell is content with many churches in one locality and with an infinite subdivision. The object here is to preserve in detail to any separate church the rights of the universal church; an idea which, after all, excludes every scriptural idea of the church, inasmuch as it excludes every thought of a body by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, seeing that the faithful of the Old Testament have never been thus united on the earth. Here are his words— "Each flock being in a confined sphere, for a limited time, that which the universal church is until the last stone be laid."

82 The reader will remember that the number "seven" gives the idea of something complete.

83 Having already spoken of the expression "universal Church," one always used to put aside the body of Christ, I shall not revert to it. The word of God speaks always of the members of the body of Christ, a body formed by the coming down of the Holy Ghost here below, and until now recognized only on earth. This body will be manifested in its fulness at the return of Christ.

84 Page 107.

85 In John 145 Christ, Mediator, asks the Holy Ghost of the Father, who sends Him; in chapter 15, Christ in His personal glory on high sends Him; in chapter 16, the Holy Ghost is here below in the disciples, and He will tell the things He has heard.

86 Page 123.

87 Page 139.

88 Page 140.

89 It is important here to give its full force to this expression, “The unity of the Spirit.” This unity is in no wise as Mr. M. presents it to us, a matter of feeling. The unity of the Spirit is the unity which flows from this, that the One Spirit has united the members in Jesus in one body. Look at the Epistle to the Ephesians. God has established Christ “to be the head over all things,” and Head of the Church “which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” That is to say, that the Church, as a body, is the complement of the Head, which is Christ. He has quickened us together with Him—Jews and Gentiles also together. He has made us, as Christians, sit together with Him in the heavenly places. “For to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body… Now therefore ye [Gentiles] are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets [of the New Testament. See Ephesians 3:5], Jesus Christ being himself the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord [this is what has replaced die destroyed temple]: in whom ye [Gentiles] also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Such is the unity of the Spirit, which in chapter 4 He exhorts the faithful to keep, by recalling to them that there was one Spirit and one body. And mark here that the descent of the Spirit, the power of unity for the body, is in such a way before the eyes of the apostle (and that founded on this, that Christ is gone on high) that he only knows the apostles in the Church as given, after the ascension, by

Christ, the Head of the body. (See also 1 Corinthians 12.) There the unity of the Spirit is not so much in contrast with the previous separation of Jews and Gentiles as with the plurality of demons. “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit… But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit. 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. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body [whether Jews or Gentiles]… Now ye are the body of Christ.”

Such then is the unity of the Spirit, a reality in the power of God, and not merely feelings in man. The bond of peace is in order to keep this unity.

90 Page 41.

91 We can sum up the substance of this work in a few sentences. Having quoted many passages, Mr. M. says, page 63, “One asks oneself, Where is the regular ministry? The fact is, there is none, in the ordinary sense of the word. A body of men set apart for public religious instruction would have been an innovation totally opposed, even to the ideas of the Jews in apostolic times, and still more to those of Christians.”

And page 65, “Let people shew me one single ordination, then I will believe all the others. To say that some of these men had miraculous gifts makes no difference to the question.” And again, page 144, “I regard then all nomination of the ministers of the word as an infringement on the divine order.” (Mr. M.’s italics.) “One may put oneself on the ground of divine right or of human order. It may be the Anglican priest in white, or the ‘inevitable man in black,’ or again, the

Dissenting minister slipping in as if smuggled in under the cloak of the biblical elder. All nomination for speaking in worship is an evil." It appears that Mr. M. does not attach much importance at least to infringements on divine order.

92 Pages 92, 93.

93 Page 94.

94 Page 144.

95 Page 92.

96 Page 96.

97 Page 84.

98 Page 47.

99 Page 72.

100 Page 74.

101 Page 79.

102 It is this which shews how utterly without basis the anonymous author of the tract "Are Elders to be Established?" is, when he declares that elders cannot be obeyed unless they have been established by men, and how completely antiscriptural such a statement is.

103 Page 98.

104 Page 81.

105 This is, unintentionally, the exact picture of the Free Churches of Geneva and Vaud, and at the same time an answer to the "Examination" by a minister of Neufchatel.

106 The effect of this on the question, explains why the fall of the Church has been made so prominent by this

discussion, although this fall was not in the least degree the doctrine which served as a foundation for the contested position.

107 Page 131.

108 It is singular that he proposes to them to remain thus. Page 132.

109 Page 78.

110 Page 9.

111 It is good that the reader should give heed to this word “baptized” in connection with the question, “What is the Church?” John the baptist said, “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” After His resurrection the Lord Jesus says to His disciples, “Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” Pentecost therefore was that baptism. It is by this means then that we have been formed into one body. The Church, its unity, its existence as a body, all that is therefore the result of the descent of the Holy Ghost here below, of the baptism of the day of Pentecost. This is the unity, the body, the Church, which the word recognizes, and it recognizes no other. It is certain that the completeness of it shall be manifested in the day of Christ; but that which the word of God recognizes as the body, the unity, the Church, is that which is formed where the Holy Ghost is, that is, on the earth. As God, the Holy Ghost is everywhere. By His divine power, He will keep for glory the very dust of the blessed (Rom. 8:11). But as, whilst He was God, the Son descended here below, and that, with respect to the ways of God, His place was on the earth, so also the Holy Ghost has come down, and His place is on the earth. He speaks what He has heard. He forms the unity.

When once, by the grace of God, one has laid hold of this truth through faith, all becomes clear. This universal invisible Church, and arguments like those of Mr. Monsell, all this has—and for ever—lost all its force.

112 Page 19.

113 He adds “and of time”; but we need not at present be occupied with this, unless it be to beg the reader to recollect the principles established in the last note.

114 Page 28.

115 Page 29.

116 Page 35.

117 Page 30.

118 Page 31.

119 Mr. M. says also “we gain nothing by concealing from ourselves the truth.” This so-called diversity is a deplorable state of disunion.

120 Page 31.

121 Page 41.

122 Page 61.

123 Page 35.

124 This is, in my opinion, a singular reason for establishing a system which as yet exists nowhere.

125 Pages 35, 36.

126 Page 36.

127 And see to what this amounts. Mr. M. hews down nationalism, which is “a guide to the ditch,” (p. 13). According to him, again, the Free Church of the Canton

de Vaud assembles “round a holy electoral urn” (p. 126). The Evangelical Church of Geneva is guilty of an infringement upon the divine order. The system of the minister of Neufchatel, the author of the “Examination,” is not tenable according to the word. Besides, it is when death has laid hold of the Church that the actual institution has come in, that is to say, that the elders have monopolized the ministry. Then, after having shewn that all is anti-scriptural, brethren are called on to submit to a system which places the sin of man on the same line with the judgment of God, and which wishes us to accept the one, as we submit ourselves to the other! Mr. M. sweeps away all other systems; let them protest if they think fit, we gladly leave to them all this debate. Meanwhile, we assuredly do not accept the horrid doctrine which the author puts in their place. The fact is that the only thing which Mr. M. leaves standing is the philosophical demi-rationalism of the journal “La Reformation,” which teaches us that the word of God is no rule, except as to the truths necessary to salvation.

Our adversaries mutually overthrow each other. The journal “La Réformation” and Mr. M. overthrow the anonymous author of the tract “Are Elders to be Established?” and his commandments.

The anonymous author, in his turn, accuses the system upheld by “La Reformation,” of disobedience. The minister of Neufchatel and Mr. M. mutually overthrow each other, and so with the others, and that too on the very points on which they attack brethren. I have but one counsel to give brethren: it is to leave these gentlemen to fight out these things between themselves, and to remain quiet, blessing God for His goodness,

which gives them peace, and with all their heart to follow after Christ and His presence.

128 Page 33.

129 Page 44.

130 Page 47.

131 Page 47.

132 Page 53.

133 Pages 53, 54.

134 Pages 36, 37.

135 Alluding to the two and a half tribes.

136 Page 40.

137 Page 59.

138 Page 101.

139 Page 101.

140 The fact is that the Christian never chooses his path. It is a question of being faithful in the path which God has traced for us by His will. And, if there be a question of the heart's choice, surely, if God gives us the grace for it, a christian heart would accept as a gift the privilege of suffering with Jesus (Phil. 1:29; ch. 3:10).

141 Page 96.

142 Page 135.

143 Page 136.

144 Page 100.

145 Page 124.

146 Page 135.

147 Page 136.

148 Page 14.

149 Page 13.

150 Page 126.

151 Page 128.

152 Page 128.

153 Page 129.

154 Page 144.

155 Page 128.

156 Page 126.

157 Page 125, 126.

158 Page 132.

159 Page 129.

160 Page 129 to 133.

161 Page 130.

162 Page 101.

163 Page 78.

164 Page 109.

165 Page 109.

166

167

168 Page 91.

169 Page 48.

170 Page 52.

171 “The Testimony,” published in French. [Tr.]

Scriptural Views Upon The Subject Of Elders,

In Answer To A Tract Entitled

“Are Elders To Be Established?”172

Chapter 1.

There is a difficulty in believing that the most precious truths— truths which, when received from God, are a source of joy and blessing to our hearts—should produce controversy and painful conflict.

But we must take it as it is. It is exactly these truths, the dissemination of which meets with all the hostility of the flesh and all the prejudices of souls accustomed to things which cannot hold their ground in presence of those truths. I shall draw the attention of my reader to a new phase of the controversy, to which the testimony of God in these last days has given rise. It is true that the fundamental points have been sufficiently discussed, but since the truth has made immense progress, those who are opposed to it have completely changed the ground on which battle was joined.173 An answer then must be given to these fresh attacks directed against the truth and to the fresh arguments intended for the defence of error.

In the case which now occupies us the defence of the old order of things has been entirely given up. The greater part of the things which, for a long time were the objects of various attacks, has been abandoned, as not being in accordance with the word of God, and not only abandoned, but stigmatized as faulty. Those who, for

many years, have borne testimony against these things, speak of them more calmly.

According to our adversaries themselves, the clergy is of the devil.174 Again, according to them, the visible unity of the Church has been lost.

Thus, at least, there is much ground gained; one would have thought that the controversy was at an end.

No! A man does not always receive the truth even when he is reduced to confess that he is in error.

Nothing but the ground of the contest is changed, and in changing to a new ground, it is sought to render a part of that which has been written on these subjects useless. As the actual order of things is no longer vindicated, the attacks upon it, say they, are superfluous. But let us state the facts plainly. If the attacks are no longer vindicated, it is because the conclusions of those who love that testimony have been accepted. Have they been accepted from the bottom of the conscience before God, so as to place them humbly in the position which follows the admission of these principles? Alas! in no way. They only say that, since the early centuries, it is true, all has been corrupted; that the order established by God has been abandoned; and that the order of things which has sprung from it is of the devil. It is true, say they again, that the visible unity of the Church has been destroyed; but they add, “I can re-establish it quite as well as the apostles; and those who do not submit to that which I have established, are the enemies of the unity of the Church.”

The facts are admitted intellectually, to give room for the pretentious action of the will of man. The truth has

not penetrated their conscience so as to place it in humiliation before God.

Chapter 2.

At Geneva it was needful, either to induce certain brethren to join the new Free Church founded under the name of the Evangelical Church of175 Geneva, or else to throw discredit on their principles, and thus in one way or another to destroy the testimony rendered to the truth. It may be that the testimony had been borne in much weakness and accompanied by faults and shortcomings in every respect.

It is a thing which the brethren who bore the testimony would not deny. They would confess it all before God and before man. But the testimony was there. The humbler, they who bore it, kept themselves, the better they would find themselves for it.

The details of the steps taken, of the correspondence, and of the conferences which took place, would bring no great profit to the reader. What concerns Christians is the path they have to follow in order to glorify God.176 The question is a very serious one. It is admitted, that, as regards its visible unity, the Church is in ruins. They profess that the clergy, with whom this visible unity has rested for sixteen centuries, is not according to God. But it is pretended that, putting the clergy aside, we can re-establish that which existed in the days of the apostles, such as the apostles themselves had established it.

It is, it must be allowed, a pretension which has a very wide bearing, and we should compromise ourselves deeply in giving way to it and submitting to those who

put it forth, if after all it is a pretension unauthorized by God.

Are the Christians of Geneva in a position to re-establish the organization of the Church in the primitive state in which the apostles left it, and which state, by the consent of all, exists no longer?

Yet, I do not deny, since they have put forward this pretension, it is a solemn thing to reject it, if in truth the thing could be done. We must look deeper into it than the individuals. Even if those who have undertaken it are not capable of it; if the thing be possible; if it is according to the mind of God, one should be very cautious of raising any obstacle to it and of discouraging those who seek to realize it. One thought, which, moreover, will act with power on a conscientious soul, on a soul penetrated with love for the Church, is the dread of limiting the energy of the love of God towards His Church. It is the reproach of the Spirit of God to Israel: “They limited the Holy One of Israel.” It is clear that in itself, putting aside every other consideration, and all the recognition of the ways and judgments of God, it would be a thing infinitely precious to see the Church shine forth in all her pristine beauty, in the unity and in the ensemble which it had at the beginning. For my part, I have so little faith, that I always fear to cast a doubt on the path of him who seems to have more. It is certain, at least I am fully convinced of it, that we can and ought to realize infinitely more than we have done of that primitive state. Insomuch that I am far from disposed to raise obstacles to the realization of many things which do not exist, provided that the realization proceeds from faith, and from the Spirit of God.

But here we have to do with positive pretension, and it is that we have to answer.

Yet in this respect I find myself in a rather peculiar position. The ink is barely dry of my answer to an attack coming from the same side,177 in which we were accused of making a code of law out of the gospel, and in which we were opposed, by insisting upon the falsity of the principle which considers, as now binding on us, the primitive rules of the apostles. The word of God is no law in like matters, say they, while blaming us.

My answer to these reproaches maintained in all respects the whole authority of the word, all the while that I confess the humbling incapacity in which the Church finds itself to recover certain things which it has lost.

Is it not then a rather surprising thing to see those who cried down, in the ears of everybody who was disposed to listen, the system of Gospel-code—to see them accuse us at this time of disobedience and even of blasphemy (for to such an extent have they gone) because we do not submit to them, when they insist on the same rules, adding thereto the pretension of being in a state to re-establish them in full vigour?

If we had only to do with controversy, it would be enough to ask them to answer themselves. And why, when, in appearance at least, it is but a simple question of your maintaining your ground, in the midst of a general movement, in a place of authority which is escaping you—why would you wish to impose on us that chapter of what you call with contempt the Gospel-code, and impose that one on us, whilst cancelling all the rest as being no rule, and whilst rejecting, in principle, the

continuance of the obligation to that which is found there, whilst denying even the existence of that binding character beyond the occasion itself, which gave rise to the apostolic direction? You should at least have left to the Christian public time to forget that which you alleged six months since, and which you were repeating not six weeks ago.

But the matter is too serious to be treated thus, for the interests of the Church of God are called in question. It is a question of making oneself certain of the truth and of walking in it by the power of the precious grace of God. It is not enough to point out the errors of those who are opposed to it a sad employment of one's time, fruitless to oneself and too often to them also.

After having lost its normal position and its primitive rules, is the Church capable, when it has sinned thus, of re-entering as of right into the old position, and of re-establishing all that which the rules, long ago laid aside, had established, without taking count either of its fall or of the ruin resulting therefrom?178 Another aspect under which the right to establish an ecclesiastical system has been viewed, is that which we have just pointed out, namely, that the word is of no authority in the case,179 and that we must take our stand boldly on the platform of human order and evangelical liberty.

Having strongly contended in the "Glance," etc., for the full and entire authority of the word, I add nothing here on that point.

It is with the first point that we have to do.. But before entering on the subject, I take the liberty of laying before the eyes of the reader some facts relative to Geneva, because these facts throw light on the question

of the establishment of elders, and on the position of the brethren of “L’Ile”180 with regard to these matters.

Chapter 3

Having gone about eleven years ago to Geneva, because I had been told that I should find there some brethren who met on nearly the same grounds as ourselves, without any intention of labouring in those parts, I found the pastors of the Bourg de Four divided amongst themselves, and the flock on their part holding meetings with the object of judging of the prerogatives of the pastors181 After some hesitation, I endeavoured to bring them together and repair the breach; a work to which, as a stranger, I might apply myself without entering into painful details.

By the grace of God I succeeded, and peace was reestablished.

The principle that the Church was in ruins powerfully contributed to that end, in that I maintained the authority of the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, whilst recognizing that the actual state of things placed obstacles to our following out these epistles rigorously and in the details, on the question of elders, which had the effect of calming their minds. I cannot fail here to acknowledge the kindly feeling and affection which I at that time met with, whether from the ministers or amongst the brethren. I enjoyed their hospitality. God is my witness that I sought but their welfare. There was in their system more formalism than I could have desired. 182 But I bore with it, avoiding certain details which weighed on my conscience, such as voting, in which, as a stranger, I was plainly not called to take a share, although soon much bound up with the flock. During

four years I laboured in maintaining peace and unity, pressing on brethren the remembrance that though they might find some things which grieved them, the pastors had been the means of assembling the flock, and that very fact, as well as their work, was a legitimate source of influence, and gave them a right to the respect of brethren.

More than six months before the rupture which took place at La Pelisserie, on the occasion of a conference between the pastors and the flock, one of the pastors let me know that I ought not to be present, seeing I was not one of the flock. This communication was made to me at a moment when I was uncertain whether I ought to be present at the meeting or not. All uncertainty was put an end to, and I answered, “Well! I hardly knew what to do; here is my path plainly marked…” I have taken no part in the course of affairs at La Pelisserie from that day onward. I left Geneva and I withheld totally from all interference.

During a stay elsewhere, and when my relations with the flock were quite broken off, difficulties arose in their midst on the subject of a meeting for reading the word, a meeting to which the ministers raised some objections. One of them himself designated as a coup d’etat, on their part, the step they took, which resulted in the withdrawal of brethren; the meeting of whom formed the first nucleus of the meeting at L’Ile. In no way was I informed of what was passing, or consulted on the subject. I had no knowledge of it till later. When I heard of it, I despaired of any reconciliation. After six years’ discussion it became a question of a distinct clerical principle on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a formal denial of that principle. Later, one of the pastors

addressed himself to me to get me to bring about a reconciliation. The difficulties arose about a platform from which the supper was given out and on which the ministers stood alone. “The platform is a trifle,” said he to me. “It is,” I answered, “a standard which symbolizes a principle. Let the pastors place themselves at the table with the brethren,183 and they may be certain of ensuring more influence than by standing on their rights.” I cordially hope for my part that they may have all the influence that their labour may have brought them.

Although it is true that the question since that time has been much developed, I would still hold to this day the same language. And although the flock at Geneva was not all that I could desire, and inasmuch as I could not approve either the election of pastors by the flock or the principle of dissent which was more or less prevalent in its constitution, I can say that the remembrance of my first connection with it, has always rendered this breach infinitely painful. One of the pastors of whom I spoke above said to an English brother, that if I had been there the division would certainly not have taken place. That is very possible. God had other thoughts. And I believe in truth, that with regard to all that has taken place in the religious world, and to the development of the principles which lay at the root of the question which agitated the assembly, the position was not tenable. The division was none the less painful to me in every respect. I was forced to despair of finding any remedy for it. If the pastors had consented to take their places at the table when they met to break bread, nothing would have prevented me from trying it. The question of clergy was at the bottom of it.

This then, as to elders, is the extent to which I have gone. I could have joyfully recognized their existence in practice when they had given themselves up to the work and had received there the seal of God. Will people nominate them? I must stop. Without stopping to question the door by which they entered, I have recognized them according to my principles, when I have found them at the work. If their nomination is to be put forward as a principle, one must be decided.184 The whole question of knowing, what the Church is, what is its state, what are the bases of its relations with Christ, what is its responsibility, the path which befits it in its state of failure; all is compromised. If not, my mind turns in preference to subjects totally different to that of the election of elders. Christ is too precious, the times too serious, to dwell on such points.

Chapter 4.

I now come to the tract, “Are Elders to be established?” Its author and those who with him oppose the truth may rest assured that they have something far different to do than to rejoice at the opportunity which the ill-worded sentence of a brother has given them, of falsifying and blackening the principles of “brethren.” They have to do with God, who protects His truth—a God who humbles His own when they have need of it, but who knows how to judge those that oppose Him and His truth. I now approach the root of the question.185 I say distinctly that I believe the root of the thought which has been called in question is perfectly right, and that the whole question is contained in it—a question too serious to be discarded by a mere personal discussion. The expression of it, it is true, was not accurate, and I think some fault

may be found in that it had not been sufficiently weighed before God.186 But I think that to reject the thought is a mark of want of conscience and of heart toward God.

It seems to me to be the pretentiousness of human pride at the time when God calls for humiliation and self-abasement. If, in such a state, one had felt willing to own in fact and in heart those whom God had manifested to be true elders in the midst of all the flock of God at Geneva, I could but have rejoiced at it. Souls alas! have not come to that yet. What has been done is far removed from that. It is said by them that they cannot obey their spiritual leaders, unless a preparatory commission and a popular election had established them as such. On what command is the existence of such commission founded? On what command does the election of that commission rest? And on what does the ancient commission itself rest, which settled matters thus?

To insist on the nomination of elders, as if it were an act of obedience, is to betray a want of conscience and of heart towards God, and a plain simile will make it understood. A father desires that his children should go and shew themselves to their grandfather in their clean clothes and in a proper manner, and he orders them strictly to walk on the footpath and by no means to leave it, for fear of dirtying their clothes. The eldest of the boys, whose pride is hurt at the idea of going and shewing himself to his grandfather as a little child, goes and splashes himself with mud whilst on his road thither, and then begins to insist on the duty of walking on the footpath in order to keep himself clean. Is that obedience? Is that conscientiousness? Is that a fitting

feeling towards his father? Where, let me ask, is the authority which he claims over his brothers?

The root of the question which has provoked so much indignation is, that considering the state of the Church we cannot act to the satisfaction of those who wish to nominate elders; that this nomination of elders is a proud piece of pretension; that corruption having laid hold on the whole system which God had established by the apostles, men are not capable of establishing anew a similar system, that we cannot now refound the Church. I speak only of established organization. The Church herself plainly exists at all times.

In reality, what they pretend to do is to lay the foundation of the Church anew.

A fundamental principle in all the argument of our brother, M. Foulquier, is that God never re-establishes the “original state” of things that have fallen into ruin in the hands of man.

The anonymous author denies this principle. Let us see with what success.

He takes the time of the Judges as that of the deepest corruption of Israel, which, under a certain aspect, is so far true that I accept it without raising more difficulties. What then was at that time the primitive state in question? It was that God Himself was their king; just as God Himself points it out to Samuel; 1 Sam. 8:7, 8; chap. 12:12. The priest was the point of contact, the bond between the people and God; and God raised up judges when there was need of them.

Has that state of things been re-established? Never. And what is more, it never will be. It would be difficult to find

an example more striking and more indisputable of the truth of the principle contested by the anonymous author.

In a certain sense, many things will be re-established under the Messiah; but the counsels of God, as regards the Messiah Himself, exclude the possibility of the return of Israel to the state in which they were under the judges. As regards the priesthood itself, not only another family has been invested with it, but the very position of the priesthood has been totally changed. The priesthood has lost for ever the position in which it was formerly. It continues, it is true, and without it man could not stand before God. But God has said, “I will raise up a faithful priest who will stand before my Anointed.”187 The introduction of the Anointed has changed everything. He it is, the King, who became responsible for the maintenance of order in the midst of the people, who governed them, who judged them, and whose conduct determined so to say the judgment which God passed on His people; 2 Kings 23:26.

The anonymous author asks, “At what time did royalty fall?” and he answers at once, “It was under the reign of Saul.”

Plainly Saul (asked for by the sin of the people, although allowed of God) is not the monarchy according to the will of God. David and Solomon are those whom we see in that character. It is in Solomon that the fall of the monarchy is shewn. God’s patience was long-suffering for the sake of His servant David. The immovable promise of God to the posterity of David cannot fail in the Person of the Christ; but it is quite clear that the monarchy has never been re-established in its primitive

state, and that on the contrary, as far as this monarchy was confided to men in the flesh, it has been judged by God; that, after long-enduring patience, God has put an end to it, and that at the same time He has put an end to the relations of His people with Himself.

Does the anonymous author think that the primitive state of the people was re-established in the time of Nehemiah?

In order to present to the people the Messiah, His Son, come in the flesh, and to place Israel under responsibility on that point, as He always does before accomplishing His designs of grace, God preserved the tottering remnant of a people enslaved by the Gentiles. Was this the primitive state of that people? Was it their primitive state to be slaves of the Gentiles? Was it for this that God had redeemed them from Egypt? Was the name of Lo-ammi recalled? The state in which God called Israel “not my people” (Lo-ammi), was certainly not the primitive state of the people of God. At the command of Cyrus, His king, a residue of the people go up to Jerusalem,188 whilst Daniel, the type and sign of the true position of the people, remains at Babylon, and at the same time tells before God their history according to the counsels of God. The altar was re-established by faith. It was on the one hand the grace of God, and on the other in man the faithfulness which recognized Him in his difficulties, as his safeguard and wall of defence. Look at that beautiful passage, Ezra 3:2, 3. The people of God are always in their right place when they adore God and recognize Him as their surety and strength.

It is quite another thing to pretend to re-establish, according to the order of the dispensation, that which

has been lost. Could he re-establish the kings? Did he place Zorobabel on the throne? By no means. That would have been to have disowned the judgment which God was passing on His people. Did Nehemiah dare even to put in order the priests who could not trace their genealogy? No; he put them aside.

Read Nehemiah 9:36, 37 and you will see how far the primitive state had been re-established.

The anonymous author wishes to distinguish between the dispensation and the political state. That is really too bold for a reader of the Bible. Was the subjection of the people of God thus to the Gentiles only a political affair? Had the king of Israel no connection with the dispensation? God had abandoned His temple and His throne, and had confided to the Gentiles the power on earth, in saying of Judah, “they are no more my people” (a word which will not be withdrawn till the return of Christ); and they go on to say that it bears no reference to the dispensation but to the political state of the people! This is too violent! What is the political state of the people of God on the earth apart from the dispensation?

Must we then alas! overturn all this to re-establish elders? For my part, I believe that we have the assured promise of the Saviour, who changes not, that He will be always in the midst of two or three met in His name, so that we always have the right to raise our altar. It is our duty. We are always bound to recognize God. Hence by His grace I ought to do all that He may give me the power to do for His glory. To work for Him, He must send us for this object.

As to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the people, the meaning which the anonymous author attributes to the passage, Haggai 2:5, is totally foreign to it. God had never withdrawn His Spirit from His people, although He had judged and punished His people (Neh. 9:20). The Spirit instructed and directed the people still. (Compare Isaiah 53:14.) But it is certain that, in a sense different to that which we have just given the passage, the Spirit of God has not dwelt in the midst of His people till after that Jesus was glorified.189 As to slavery, it is certain that in certain respects the people of God can be in slavery. At the very epoch of which the anonymous author speaks, in saying that Israel was not under the slavery of Satan, “since” etc., Nehemiah says that he was the slave of kings whom we know to have been the instruments of Satan, like wild beasts. Even were I a child of God, if I put myself under the directions of Rome, led away by the seductions of the enemy, I should surely be under the slavery of Satan, wrongly if you will, but I should be there.

The question is to know, if it would not be the same sort of thing in the case where one puts oneself under elders, who have been chosen apart from the will of God. I say neither yes nor no. Nothing is more simple than what is said of it. The idea that a child of God cannot put himself under the slavery of Satan is a dangerous error.

The remark of the anonymous author in section 17 is totally wrong. The priesthood had been the centre of unity, it was so no longer. The monarchy had become the centre.

As to section 20, with reference to the difference in the directions of God (Isa. 37:33; Jer. 25:8, 9), the force of

the argument is not apprehended by the anonymous author. The texts are cited quite fitly to shew the principle in question; and that which the texts shew is that what God authorizes at a given moment, does not necessarily become a rule for those who are in a different state. To apply in this state an order of God, is not to have consciousness of one's sin; it is as if one pretended to walk on the footpath to keep oneself clean, when one had already purposely splashed oneself off the footpath. The worship of Cain was "sin," because he took no account of his fall. To elect elders, is not to obey; it is to pretend to have the power to do that which the primitive Church did, that which the apostles did.190 As to section 25,191 if we take popery as an example, all the weakness of the arguments of the anonymous author is at once apparent. There Satan governs clearly in the Church under the appearance that that form is one approved of God. It is plain that the anonymous author does not understand what the power of Satan is, nor that Satan can exercise a fearful power, even over the children of God, if they remain in a system where this power acts, and the rather because it is veiled from them, and that they themselves conscientiously hold this system to be the Church of God, thinking that to remain in it is to obey the authority that God had established in the Church, and to keep the unity which ought to be found there.

I understand that the anonymous author pretends to escape, in that which he does, from this power of Satan. But to set oneself in principle against the thought expressed in the paragraph of Foulquier, which occupies us, is to deny that which spiritual intelligence ought to understand and recognize as true.

“It is clear that if the adversary gains possession of a thing which God had placed in our hands, to desire to retain it is to remain so far under his power.”

That is clear, if we preserve that which Satan makes use of in the exercise of his power; so far we remain under that power. This is so plain that the proposition demonstrates itself.

That nevertheless is not a sufficient answer. The anonymous author may answer, and does answer in fact in one place: I wish to keep nothing. The Church has not kept the scriptural system. The clergy is of the devil. I want none of it. I want to re-establish elders, such as they were at first. I, for my part, want to begin anew the Church at Geneva, on the primitive footing.192 One can answer, Your elders will be always the clergy. One can answer also, God has given you no mission for that; an answer which we must justify, as to the first point. As to the second, it is for the anonymous author to produce his title and to prove his mission, or that of those who have undertaken that work. If they do not gather with Christ, they scatter.

Let us examine in detail the anonymous author’s objections. Alas! all here is sophistry. He asks when the apostasy begins. Well! we will say with him that the germ of it existed at the epoch which is spoken of in these terms, “The mystery of iniquity doth already work,” 2 Thess. 2:7. After that epoch, says he, the apostle desired there should be deacons. Then our author lets us see that the Church was in a bad moral state in many respects when the apostle directs Timothy and Titus to set up deacons.193 Be it so. He asks in consequence, “How does this same disorder impose

upon us at this day the obligation of putting aside this institution?" Finally, he adds, as to the setting up elders, "This state of failure does not dispense with our duty of preserving them in our turn."

What an argument! The faithful are in a sad state. Officers have been established to reduce it to order. That is the reason why, when officers, having possessed themselves of the rights of the sovereign, have become the source and instruments of disorder, it is needful to keep them. That is a convincing argument! Also the anonymous author must change totally what Foulquier said! He makes him say that this institution puts us under the power of Satan, because we live in a dispensation in a state of failure. Foulquier said, If the institution itself is under the power of Satan, in that case to retain it, would be to put ourselves under that power. To maintain the institution when it was a barrier against corruption, or to maintain it when it became the source, the power, and the expression of it, these are two very different things. But that is not yet all.

They wish not to give up the establishment of elders,, and to maintain it in its turn. Ah! I ask, What is it that the anonymous author retains at Geneva? Are elders established? Where is the institution so dear to him? It has no existence, and, according to him, it is centuries since it ceased to exist. The test consists then not in maintaining but in re-establishing it, in creating it anew. On the other hand, there cannot be any question of giving it up; we cannot give up that which has no existence. There is nothing then which we can give up.

This institution is not then to be maintained but to be produced anew. Our author thinks that his colleagues

and he have enough creative energy to do that which the apostles did in the Church.

The following facts will shew us how they are in a state to imitate them.

First, There has been a commission charged to draw out a constitution for the Church.

Secondly, By this constitution, the Church confides its administration to the assembly of the elders. (Art. 14.)

Those who have given their adhesion to this constitution being considered to compose the Evangelical Church at Geneva, they must needs have elders. They are called together to elect a commission, to be charged with preparing the difficult and important task of the election of elders. There is no enquiry either if there be men fit to be elders, or if the elders desired of God for His Church at Geneva are to be found in the midst of that which takes the name of the Evangelical Church. To obey the word of God, this Evangelical Church is called on to have a presbytery; it ought to choose those whom the Lord calls to be elders or bishops in the flock. What flock? Is there more than a sect there? It is natural that those who have placed themselves at the head of the movement should direct it. Let us suppose even that some will seek to add some persons for the purpose of giving a counterpoise to this establishment of clergy, and that others will oppose it. Is there the slightest resemblance between this and the Epistles to Timothy and to Titus? If not, why speak so loudly of a positive command? Would this positive command be to judge by the facts, to reinstate you in the clerical position, which you have just lost and which you still love? Would this command be to make a trial of a new sect and to attach

oneself to it to see if that attempt would succeed? The Spirit of God never makes attempts. Do you think that one who walked after the Spirit would try it? He obeys when he has light; and when he has not, he waits. Do you think that, finding brethren occupied in the midst of Christians assembled out of the world, watching over them, devoted to their service, caring for their souls, and blessed by God in their labour, I should question their service? Never. But, when I see a special class of persons raising the pretension of founding a church, preparatory commissions, and others to install men in their places, and that they appeal to the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, whilst accusing me of disobedience to the word of God if I do not submit, I hesitate. I cannot either recognize a like pretence or submit myself thereto, as if it was to yield obedience to the epistles, which they bring forward.

If the author deceives himself, if it is not to assemble with Christ (and if it be a false pretence, it is certainly not to assemble with Christ), it is then to scatter. He presents unity, which we all desire, under the condition of recognizing the elders. He will pardon me if I hesitate. He accuses me of being disobedient in my not recognizing that he has sufficient authority to create them. For it is just this. That I should obey leaders [given of God], well and good. I will do it with all my heart. But that a command to obey implies the power to create that which we are to obey, is going rather too far.

What we ask of you is the command to make elders. We quite recognize the biblical command to obey them. But at this time the elders whom we ought to obey do not exist, and that is the point on which we are all agreed. So to demand, as you do, that we should shew a biblical

command to reject the institution of elders, when that institution is no longer in existence, is really to say nothing. I repeat it: I reject nothing. Where are the elders? Ah! says the author, there are none. How then reject them? But we want to make them, says he. I answer, That is another question. Has God sent you for that? Where is His command? I await it.

But, that all may come to nought rather than reject the setting up of elders, the anonymous author asks us why, if the ruin of the Church hinders us from electing elders, we preserve baptism and the Supper. I ask him, in my turn, Have those two things ceased to exist? No. I only have to withdraw myself from the additions and abuses which corrupt them. Besides, in putting them in practice, I create nothing; I neither elect nor set up anyone; I make use of no authority.

Pardon me, says the Papist or the Puseyite, and even often the Protestant, in consecrating the Supper you use authority. You arrogate it to yourself in preaching the gospel. What authority have you for that?

I stop. The question is solemn. Am I under the alternative, either of rejecting these privileges and blessings, or of accepting them with every sort of corruption and vitiated by grave errors?

I examine my Bible seriously, and that is what I have done, and I find all liberty. I open it, and the clergy which have corrupted all that, is not recognized there. It teaches me that I may enjoy them freely.

I say then, as regards these things and others like them, I have withdrawn myself from under the slavery of Satan. Yet more, I will recognize, as far as lies in my power, those persons who bear, even in the face of many

imperfections, the marks of being overseers. If they insist on the clergy, and if they deny the unity of the Church, I cannot walk in such a path.

As regards the promise of the presence of Jesus in the midst of two or three met in His name, it is not I who institute anything, if I meet with others. It is Jesus who accomplishes that which He promised. The interpretation of the anonymous author is surely totally erroneous. He strives to deprive us of all.

Happily we, with all the Church of God, have too often, unworthy of it as we are, had experience of the faithfulness of Jesus, to be troubled with this interpretation.

It is a mistake to restrict to discipline the scope of this promise. It is, on the contrary, one reason for which discipline thus exercised is recognized by God; and that reason is, that Jesus is there. But this precious declaration is applicable, and more directly applicable, to requests made in similar circumstances than to discipline. It is a fact always true that, where two or three are met in the name of Jesus, Jesus is there. It is a general declaration given as a reason for which discipline is valid. For, says the Lord, where two or three are met in my name, there I am in their midst. Nothing more simple. I have nothing then to recognize except that the interpretation is wrong.

I have already spoken of Nehemiah’s altar. The passage from Jeremiah proves nothing, unless this principle, namely, that the Lord can put aside that which He has Himself established. In fact, that has come to pass as regards the elders. The question is simply this, Is it the will of God that we should re-establish any anew

officially? As to the altar, we have it, and we have it restored through grace. We adore with joy around the table of the Lord. We can do the same in everything, which is not a pretension to that we do not possess.

The anonymous author has marred the meaning of section 28, by separating it from the sentence of section 27, to which the section 28 relates, and which shews very clearly that it has reference to the word of God, but that the power and operation of the Holy Spirit are necessary to give us discernment.

Section 27 speaks of the light of the conscience, of the light of the law, of the prophets, and of the light of the gospel.

Does the anonymous author deny that the witness of the Holy Spirit is necessary in these very times? If he is of this opinion, nothing will surprise me.194 To quote the conduct of Diotrephes as a sufficient proof that he was an elder, is a curious way of attracting us to this species of authority. Let us congratulate the preparatory commission, that a like argument has not a shadow of a foundation. There are, alas, but too many Diotrephes, without its being necessary to have established elders where to produce them. We can hardly believe that our author seriously wished to say that the fact of desiring to be the first, and in consequence not to receive the apostles, proves to him that a man may be an elder. He asks if we should not separate ourselves for the cause of the presence of Diotrephes. And why separate ourselves from the Church, because it contains an evil man? For my part I would never separate from anything, of which I could have an idea that it was the Church after having left it. Besides, I do not believe that 3 John 10 means

“When I come I will shew him what he has done.” Martin employs, it is true, this expression: but upomneso rather means, I will remember that which he has done, or I will make him remember that which he has done, without precisely stating what the apostle proposed to himself to do when he had come.

As to the explanation of the seven churches of the Apocalypse, this is scarcely the place to give the interpretation of them. It would be writing a book. It is clear that when one states that “the angels of the churches can only be their councils of elders,” one can draw what conclusions one wishes. This meaning of the word “angel” is neither that of the word nor that of tradition. It is beyond doubt that, in the word, angel does not mean a council of elders, and tradition also gives a totally different meaning.

The growing failure of the seven churches is a question of interpretation with which I shall not occupy myself here. The anonymous author makes confusion in that which he says of it, for it is evident that the fact of being a candlestick of gold, in no way hinders the fact of failure already pointed out to Ephesus (“remember whence thou art fallen”), and does not even hinder it from being spued out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus, that which was to be accomplished with respect to Laodicea. In that which follows he makes such a confusion between the state of the universal Church, to which the question of failure applies, and the local churches, in which there were elders, that a few words will be enough to shew the weakness of his argument.

We may take the seven churches as churches; or we may, with many Christians, consider them as a prophetic

history of the Church as regards its moral state here below. The author says, as regards this last point of view, the elders and the churches ought to exist even to the end. But this is complete confusion. For in this last view we have ceased to regard these chapters as being occupied with the seven [local] churches. The Spirit makes use of it to shew the state of the professing Church in the course of ages.

Chapter 5.

At last we come to that which we asked. The anonymous author alleges a distinct command. Titus was left in Crete to appoint elders. That is clear. No one denies it. But here is the question.

How does that authorize it, or, if he prefers it, how does that authorize some believers in Geneva to appoint them? It is very certain that it was not believers who had the power to appoint elders; for had it been so, it was needless to send Titus to Crete to do it.

It was an act for which the believers were not competent, and for the accomplishment of which the presence of the faithful companion of the apostle himself was necessary.

What is there that shews that the anonymous author and the preparatory commission have that competency? They say so, but that is not exactly enough to make us receive it. The order of Paul to Titus speaks evidently of a commission confided to a certain person left there on purpose, because the thing which was the object of this commission could not be executed without him. I ask the reader if that is not the natural force of this passage: a conclusion which the character of Titus supports. The

anonymous author tells us that it is “a positive order, a very clear command of the Lord, given by His apostle, not only to Titus, but to all those who later would be called by the Holy Spirit to lead the Churches of God.” This term “to lead the Churches of God” is rather doubtful. Does the author wish to say that the elders of one town have a mission to establish elders in all towns, and that they have a special mission for that? Now that was undoubtedly the case with Titus. He had been left in a peculiar case to set in order the things which the apostle had begun and was furnished for that purpose with the authority of the apostle.

Have the elders a like authority? Are they charged to impose rules on other churches, and furnished for this purpose, with the authority of the apostle? Now that was the case of Titus. And, if one part of the command be binding, why should not the other part be equally so? It is the same authority which is in exercise. The apostle, in imposing on Titus, without any other direction, the task of setting in order that which remained to be set in order, shewed he had confidence in his capacity to do it in a fitting way. It is just the same as to the appointment of elders, which rests exactly on the same foundation. If the author is authorized to appropriate to himself these things, the pope has not less reason to take to himself that which the Lord confided to the son of Jonas.

Many things had been set in order by Paul j others were to be so by Titus; that is, all that remained yet to be set in order. In doing so, Titus used an authority in the exercise of which he could act in a competent way, which gave to his acts the same authority as the acts by which the apostle, whose delegate Titus was, had already set in order other things.195 Had all elders this

mission? Was this command always binding? The anonymous author cites not one word of scripture to shew us that this command applies to Christians of the present day. But, says he, it is clear it is a binding command at that time, for he tells Timothy in what way one ought to conduct oneself (not “to behave thyself”) in the Church of God. This point has been already discussed. But, as it is an important point, and the sole and solitary foundation of the author’s system, it is worth while examining it again.196 We do not doubt that elders had been established in the Church. We wish even to realize and respect all that is possible to be realized of their work in these present times. Brethren have always acted according to this principle,197 on certain occasions with more energy than on others.

I have frequently declared this in the controversy which had taken place: the question of elders has never been a capital point in my eyes. Nevertheless I have always recognized so much of it as existed, and when the occasion offered, I have sought to give activity and development “to that excellent work.” By the grace of God I will do so still, giving to it all the energy which He may grant me. In certain places it has been in exercise happily and with blessing. In others it would be a great blessing if God in His goodness would raise up the instrument. But if, because the name of clergy yet inspires repugnance, it is wished under the name of elders and under the pretext of obedience to re-establish the clergy, I do not let myself be deceived by words. When I am told that I can neither obey the elders nor recognize them (1 Thess. 5:12, 13), unless men have officially set them up, I cannot trust it, although I am told that it has no more anything to do with clergy. I do

not see the action of the Spirit of God in the preparatory commission. This commission takes the place of the Holy Ghost; and in taking it, it denies Him, even if they are not aware of it.

And as regards the command itself, the commission with which Timothy was charged, had not as its object the establishment of elders, nor did the apostle give any command like it. Paul, on going into Macedonia, had begged Timothy to remain at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3), a town in the Church of which elders existed, the establishment of which is never mentioned in the word; 1 Tim. 5:10, 17-19. And see in what terms the apostle expresses the special object of the mission of his son Timothy, “As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.”

Then he enlarges on certain points over which Timothy was to watch for the purpose of putting them in order. In explaining himself on various subjects, he enumerates the qualities and gifts desirable in a bishop. But before entering on all the details of that which was fitting for the Church of God, for the Church of the living God, over which he was thus to watch, the apostle says, My son Timothy, I entrust to thee, I give thee (paratithemai) this command, this charge, according to the prophecies which have been made in former time concerning thee, in order that by them thou mayest war this good warfare. It was a charge confided to him, and for which he had been designed by express prophecies; and consequently, when the apostle was to leave Ephesus, he leaves Timothy there to preserve order, in virtue of the charge he had in the house of God. Finally, after having given him the directions necessary, about a certain

number of things, he adds, “These things write I unto thee [not to the Church nor to the elders], hoping to come unto thee shortly, but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God,” etc.

I ask, Was not the commission entrusted to Timothy a special one, for the carrying out of which the apostle gave198him the necessary instruction? The apostle says, “If I tarry long.” What matters his return if this instruction concerned at once the behaviour of one particular flock, and that of the universal Church in all times? It is true that since the apostle teaches us in what manner Timothy ought to make Christians walk, this ought also to direct us in the things that concern us, although Timothy was no more there to insist on these things. That is plain.

If Timothy was to watch that the widows were not to live at the expense of the Church, when they had relations who could support them, that remains a rule for the relations of widows, although Timothy be there no longer, because the instruction which was addressed to him is a means of knowing the will of God concerning those persons. But to say that the mission entrusted to Timothy is a rule for all those who conduct the churches, is to attribute to themselves that charge for which direct inspiration had marked out Timothy by prophecy.

Clerical subtlety will ask of me, Why do you make that which concerns the widows a rule good for all times and not the rule for establishing elders?

And, first, no such order was ever given to Timothy. It was given to Titus, a thing which, we remark in passing, proves that since Paul had left Titus in Crete expressly

for that, the churches had neither the authority nor mission to do so. And as the order to establish elders was not given to Timothy, the words, “how he should behave himself,” do not in any way apply to the nomination of elders, as has been so assiduously urged on us to believe. Besides, when I find that which concerns widows, the widows of this time can profit thereby, because they are in the position in question. To profit by the directions given to Timothy we must also be in the position in which Timothy was; and if we are not, to pretend to act as Timothy, is not to obey, but to arrogate to ourselves the position of Timothy.199 When I find the qualities required by this epistle, and the excellent work in activity, I will recognize and support, with the energy God may give me, that which God has given and sanctioned. I will engage other persons to use to profit all those of His graces which may be found, if God calls me thereto in His grace. The more I see the losses which the Church has suffered, the more I am desirous of turning to profit in her all that which in His long patience and His supreme goodness, our God has left us, to the end that we may glorify Him, by giving thanks to Him with a feeling even still deeper than if I enjoyed all. This is far different from saying, I can do all that which apostles and Timothies did, and from accusing those of disobedience who do not submit themselves to a like pretension.

And when even Timothy or Titus had a special mission, and for my part I do not understand that a soul truly subject to the word could deny it, do not other parts of the word cast some light on this question? Yes, much.

The epistles instruct us by their absolute silence. If the Epistles to Timothy and Titus are remarkable for the

detailed instructions which shew that a special charge had been committed to them, the epistles to the churches never touch on the question of the establishment of elders, surely a curious thing if that establishment was a general duty of the Church in all ages.

The opportunity of speaking of it was not wanting.

Paul had not yet gone to Rome. He writes to the Christians of that town—Christians whose faith was celebrated throughout the whole world. He speaks of the exercise of various gifts and graces according as God had divided to each. Amongst other gifts and graces he mentions those who were leaders, those who went before the flock, who acted to it as guides and "pillars" (proistamenoi); not one word of elders, not a shadow of a command to establish them as the only means of walking in obedience.

If any allusion to that office should be found anywhere it is in the Epistle to the Corinthians. There was at Corinth disorder, sin, details to set in order. No mention at all of elders, no command to establish them.

In the Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, nothing.

In the Epistles to the Thessalonians, which were the first written, the apostle exhorts the faithful to recognize for their work's sake, or rather to know those who worked, to take knowledge of those who laboured in their midst and who led them;200 a proof more than evident that no one had been officially established among them, and that the apostle did not feel the want of doing any such thing, a no less evident proof that one could love people heartily so useful to the Church, recognize them, and

obey them in Christian love, without any official nomination having given them the right to demand that obedience officially, nor to impose that obedience on those who had neither faith nor affection; which is exactly the method in which the clergy act.

The Epistle to the Philippians mentions bishops without adding a word more. Peter recognized elders, placing himself on the same footing with them.

The Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts to obedience to those who led them by following their faith, because they watched over souls as responsible for that, and not because they were officially established.

Never was obedience placed on this miserable carnal footing: still less is it said that obedience was impossible without it, but just the contrary.

Neither in the epistles to the churches nor in those addressed to Christians in general is there anywhere found the smallest word relative to the choice or establishment of elders, nor to the necessity of choosing or establishing them, whilst one finds in them that there were leaders that the faithful were exhorted to recognize and respect by very different motives to that of an official establishment. What a confirmation of that which we have already abundantly shewn in our examination of the Epistles to Timothy and Titus!

The Acts of the Apostles do not leave on their part any doubt. There the apostles,201 Barnabas and Paul, choose elders for the flock in each town. The anonymous author speaks of the want of exactness in the French translations of this passage. He is right, for they wrongly add “by the suffrages of the assemblies.202 Now that word so paraphrased signifies quite simply “they chose.”

According to the etymology, it alludes to the act of extending the hand, a common way of voting; but its regular meaning is to choose, and in this sense it is twice used in the New Testament (2 Cor. 8:19; Acts 10:41, “witnesses before chosen of God”): passages which leave no doubt of its meaning. The authority of the most valuable dictionaries confirms what these passages point out.

The anonymous author speaks of apostles of a lower class, as Junias, Andronicus, and Barnabas, sent by the churches. The word of God gives no room for any such thought. There were, for certain objects, messengers of the churches. But the word of God nowhere says that Junias, Andronicus, and Barnabas had been sent by a church. There is one messenger of a church whom scripture calls “sent.” It is Epaphroditus. But the Philippians only sent him to carry temporal assistance to Paul, a prisoner at Rome; Phil. 2:25.

When Barnabas was sent, Paul was there as well as Barnabas, and it is the Spirit and not the Church that sent them. So there is no question in this passage of apostles of a lower class sent by the Church. It would be needful, to come to that, to say that Paul as well as Barnabas was an apostle of a lower class, and that would only be to play the part of the evil Jews of his time.

That which the author says on the subject of baptism is sufficiently unfortunate. The apostles hardly ever baptized. They left that care to others. Paul said he had not been sent for that; although other persons did it without any need of being authorized thereto. Further, we have already answered all that.

The author says it is no want of faithfulness to entrust to the presbytery the task of establishing elders. The question is, To whom has God entrusted this task?

Moreover, to entrust this to the presbytery is to conceal a difficulty, in a very curious manner. The care of establishing elders is entrusted to the presbytery. But according to the constitution the presbytery is the assembly of the elders; so that they are already established. And who is it who has done this? The preparation of this difficult and important task has been confided to the preparatory commission. Then it is the members of the Evangelical Church who will carry it out, so that it is entrusted neither to the presbytery, nor, according to the teaching of the author, to the evangelist, unless the presbytery prepare the thing so as to name themselves. It seems that what the word says about it is of no importance; one may as well proceed in one way as in another.

Here then we see the author thrown upon the same ground as the journal “The Reformation,” that is to say, “human order and evangelical liberty,” and that too while at the same time accusing brethren of wishing to put the word aside. He has full liberty to do that which he wishes. It is little matter what the apostles said; little matter the fact that they had entrusted the task in question to special delegates, without ever recognizing in the churches any capacity for its accomplishment. Provided elders are set up, no one is bound in any way to follow apostolical ways. Then the Evangelical Church says a thing, does it, and the anonymous author does it with it.

Here they make resound in our ears a word which sounds very well—that of the presbytery. It is “the presbytery” which acts. Bat when we translate the word all vanishes. “The presbytery” is exactly the assembly of persons who are to be called into existence.

The anonymous author says again that if the choice belonged to the apostles and to those specially sent for that purpose by them, our view might well be conceived; but that we forget it is the establishment, not the choice, of the elders, which was given to Timothy and Titus; that it is nowhere said that the apostles chose them themselves, and that the French translations are false. We have seen, in effect, that they are so, in that they add “by the suffrages of the assembly.” And it is the suffrages of the assembly that now they wish to follow at Geneva. That is to say, that the sense of the word has been falsified to sanction the system. Timothy did not, as far as we know, set up elders. Titus was sent for this, but nothing else is spoken of but the act of Titus himself. Titus, and Titus alone, set up elders. The apostle does not suffer the idea of another’s acting to appear, outside him whom he had sent into the midst of these Cretans (always liars as they were). Neither does he say that Titus had associated other persons in his work. The anonymous author pretends that scripture says nowhere that the choice of elders pertained to the apostles, nor that they themselves had chosen the elders. Now the fact is, and it has been plainly shewn, that the scripture says very positively that the apostles chose elders for the faithful in each church203 (Acts 14:23). It is true that the French versions have rendered this passage badly in that they have added “by the suffrages of the assembly.” The author does not say that the error of the

translation consists in making the assemblies here to take a part, as he wishes himself to make a certain number of the faithful to act who do not yet even form an assembly.

As regards deacons there is no analogy. When money is in question, the apostles withdraw from occupying themselves with their work; and later, Paul refused to take on himself the distribution of the offerings of the saints, unless there was one with him chosen by the churches to co-operate with him; so that his conduct should not give place to the smallest suspicion that could injure his ministry. What analogy is there, as to the source of the authority there exercised, between the case of tables and of money, and the care and the rule of the flock of God? The apostles desired that the flock should be satisfied as to temporal matters, so that there should not be any cause for discontent, jealousy, or suspicion. This principle is not applicable to elders, to whom money is nothing, and whose authority is exercised according to that which has been given from on high.

At the end of his work the anonymous author avails himself of the fact that Moses does not say who should pour the oil on the head of the priest, when he succeeded his father after his death.

The analogy which he wishes us to see in this with the question of elders seems to me to be without force, and for this reason: it is because the eventual successor of the chief priest was marked out by God Himself. The eldest son by clear right was priest after the death of his father. Genealogy confined the right of being priest. In

the case of elders, the question is one of nomination, of the choice of fitting persons.

All the law hangs on the principle of hierarchy; Heb. 7:12. The word “establishing” hides this difference. It has not the same meaning in the two cases.

When it concerns elders, it is necessary that some one should officially name them. If that be done with the authority of God, the imposition of hands will be a matter of small importance. So that the analogy does not exist; because in one case, to establish means to designate, and in the other, this has been already done on the part of God—a difference which goes to the very root of the question.

And as to the other part of the analogy, namely, the imposition of hands, it is nowhere said in the word that hands should be laid on elders. According to the habits of that age, we can well believe it to have been the case, God took care that the fact should not be recorded in the word. His fulness of wisdom knew all beforehand. So that the formal part of the analogy fails also. Thus then the analogy exists neither in the foundation nor in the form.

The designation of priests by their genealogy was of such importance, that, in the time of Nehemiah, as some priests could not shew theirs, they were rejected as defiled. Now what we ask for is exactly this very designation, conformably with what is said in the New Testament. Those who re-establish after the example of Nehemiah ought to respect the New Testament, as that instrument in God’s hand respected the Old Testament, when there is a question on the very point to which the analogy in question is applicable. When disorder had

broken the succession, and the office was seized upon by persons who, though priests, had no right to exercise the functions of the high priest (which took place in the time of the Lord Jesus), no one thought of raising up other persons to the high priesthood beside those who wrongfully occupied the place. The faithful sought elsewhere the redemption of Israel.

Speaking historically, the anonymous author would find it difficult to shew that after Aaron the sovereign priest had been anointed. In the case of Eleazar, no mention is made of it.

The anonymous author goes farther, and thinks “that the apostles were in truth themselves mistaken.” It would seem this reassures him about the danger, which he and his colleagues are running, of being mistaken also. But, to say nothing of such an argument (for this anxiety of setting in order a form of government really has no respect for anything), how is it that he has not been arrested by this expression (Acts 20:28), “The Holy Ghost hath made you overseers”? Was the Holy Spirit then mistaken? Will the author dare to say to those whom he will have established at Geneva, that the Holy Spirit has set them over the flock of God, which He has bought with His own blood?204 That is the root of the question. To correspond to those of whom the word of God speaks, the elders ought to be the elders which the Holy Spirit set over the flock of God. If not, it is but a sect, with the chiefs which this sect would have. And here it is a question clearly of the visible unity of the Church of God, that visible unity which the author allows to be lost. Now the first thing to do is to re-establish it, to form this flock of God.

Chapter 6.

I content myself now with the question relative to Geneva, although I believe that it would be impossible to do it in a single place with reality, during the general dispersion of the sheep. But let us confine ourselves to the consideration of one place. If I recognize those whom God has caused to labour in this good work with the needful qualities, I only submit myself to what God has manifested, in supporting and honouring it. But if I said, You cannot obey, unless at least we establish them officially; in this case all depends on the authority which establishes, and on the correspondence of the work in truth with that which we find in the word. Have our brethren of Geneva, and with them the anonymous author, re-established the flock of God? If not, what are their elders elders of? Can they in virtue of their official nomination say, “Over which the Holy Spirit has made us overseers”? For they say, “that one can only obey in virtue of this nomination.” For my part, I can act without fear or without hesitation on the principle I have laid down, in full recognition of our weakness; and I can do it, because I am on the ground of moral proofs and of the work done by the Holy Spirit; and it is my joy to recognize His work, wherever it may be.

You, brethren of the Evangelical Church at Geneva, you cannot do it. You rest solely on nomination and on official establishment. It is, you tell us, for this reason that it can be said that the Holy Spirit has placed them over the flock of God. Where is that flock? Does it consist of you, a mere handful of believers? Where is the authority of the Holy Spirit? It is we exclusively, say you, who exercise it, who put it in motion, and without this there is nothing which you can obey. Now there we are

thrown upon the narrowness of the old205 dissenters, 206 and a clergy to boot; and if we do not recognize you, and if we do not recognize that which you do as binding on our souls, we reject the word of God. Which of the two is it, you or we who give a hold to the Church of Rome? Is it you who tell us that obedience is impossible, if those to whom that obedience is due are not officially set up by the Church on earth? or is it we who accept that which God gives us in the midst of the ruin which surrounds us, and who act according to the precious promise that where two or three are gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus, He will be in the midst?

Brethren, know that we have made trial of the faithfulness of our gracious Master, according to His promise, and that in order to enjoy this, weak though we be, it has not been needful for us to await your convenience, nor to adhere to your pretension of re-establishing the Church of God.

In order to put out of sight this grievous schism, you wish (and Mr. Merle insists on it) that we should come to you, that we should be one with our brethren. Since when has risen this pressing need of our being in your midst? Since when did you make the discovery that the clergy are of the devil? Since when have you, has Mr. Merle, made the discovery that it was absolutely necessary to have elders, without whom they have gone on till this time? that not to come and submit to them is to sap the foundations of all obedience and morality; and finally, that not to range ourselves as partners in your work, is to make ourselves guilty of all sins? You make elders, I suppose, because you had none. What do you think then of your obedience and morality up to this moment? Brethren, such pretensions and such grand

words come rather too late. Is it since your convocation to name a preparatory commission that Christian morality is compromised in this affair?

The anonymous author tells us, “It is for this reason that we raise up again, according to their example [Ezra’s and Nehemiah’s], as far as we can, that which has fallen.”

Ah! what then has fallen? It is no question here of “the brethren’s point of view.” You do something; you raise up again the fallen Church, and this it is that you take on you to do, as Nehemiah did with regard to Israel. It is the analogy of which you avail yourselves. It is then the fallen Church, it is then the fallen dispensation, which you raise up again.

Ah! you tell me, we speak only “from the point of view of brethren.”

We are not speaking of words only. You do something, you are acting. And, tell us, are you acting according to the views of brethren? In that case, this view is true in your eyes. You raise up again. How raise again if nothing be fallen? The Church, its dispensation, you believe to be then in ruins. And you pretend to raise them up again with such an authority on God’s part, that if we do not recognize your work, we are unable to obey I or, according to the language of Mr. Merle, we are guilty of every possible sin, according to the principle laid down by James, if we are not subject to that which you do!

My brethren, forgive us if we do not admit pretensions so exorbitant. We find in admitting the ruin (and you admit it, for you cannot raise again that which has not fallen, nor act as Nehemiah, if, in fact, all is not in ruin),

you demand too much; you raise pretensions too extravagant.

It is Romanism in all its purity.

Obedience, say you, is impossible outside your system; and think of this, of a system which is not yet established! And you hold this language to us—you who up to this day have lived in disobedience, for you had not then the indispensable elders, since you are going to set them up.

I declare before God that, if at Geneva I had found true elders, who without pretension took care of the Church of God at Geneva, so far as the Holy Spirit had brought it together, I would have blessed God for it, and would have submitted thereto with all my heart. As I have already said, I have tried to do it.

But when, in order to draw me into it, they come and tell me that the clergy, to whom, until yesterday, they have so obstinately held, are of the devil; and that besides, they declare that I cannot obey without the human and official establishment of a distinct body of men; when they reason as if those who are acting in this new mode formed by themselves the flock of God; and when they represent all those who do not walk with them as in the sin of schism; I avow that such a pretension awakes in me a deep distrust. I fear that they will raise up again, not the Church, not the fallen dispensation (I hold in doubt their capacity for such a work), but that which has fallen, that which they well know has fallen, and, in the eyes of those taught of God, fallen for ever.

We repeat it, We suppress nothing. The proof of it is that, at the moment I am writing, you have not yet

created the order which you are desirous we should submit to.

You create something, and in doing so you have compromised the existence of the Reformed Church from its foundation, for obedience to it has been impossible. That to which it has been subject is of the devil, you tell us. It has been guilty of all sins at once. Christian morality has been thereby compromised. They have touched the apple of the eye, the throne, of God. For these elders (whom you are going to set up, raising up again that which is fallen) were not in existence there. Forsooth, it is the clergy who are found in it, with whom you will have no more to do. I believe indeed that such pretensions are found but in few hearts; but they are none the less subject to those who set them up.207 Mr. Merle declares, it is true, that he glories in belonging to the Reformed Church. To which? Where is this reformed church? I ask with a deep feeling of grief (for whatever may be the attacks of our adversaries, the state of the Church and the actual result of the beautiful testimony of the sixteenth century, or rather of the faithlessness of man with respect to that testimony, have been for me a lesson learned with tears and in profound anguish).

To what reformed church is it that this brilliant writer of “The History of the Reformation” belongs? He is making a new one. He lends his hand to establish institutions which are opposed to those established by Calvin at Geneva. Does he belong to the synod of the Reformed Church of France, or to those who, from convictions which all respect, have separated themselves from it?

Alas! all is ruin. We depend on the faithfulness of Him whom ruin cannot reach. Mr. Merle has haughtily attacked those who were convinced of it. Now that he believes it, he sets up something new, telling us that we must needs come, and this too while saying he glories in belonging to that which exists no longer, to that which he has abandoned, as far as it exists, and abandoned for conscientious convictions, for which I should be the last to blame him; but which he has in fact abandoned. For, finally, in the midst of the free churches on every side, in order to make the rights of Christ respected, to maintain healthy doctrine, to establish elders who did not exist and without which one cannot obey, where is that reformed church to which Mr. Merle belongs?

No. The truth comes out in spite of them. They wish to raise up again that which is fallen, and they wish that we should confide the task to them and their preparatory commission.

Come to us, they cry, and so you will put a stop to a schism which afflicts the Church. You are then the Church in its unity; and apart from you is schism.

But I do not believe it. The language you make us hear is that of Rome. I have come to Christ. I see no need of going farther; this would be to leave Christ. And who is it who addresses this invitation to us?

It is the writer who published not long since that the ministry, that is to say the clergy, was that glory which should remain, mention of which is made in 2 Corinthians 3:11! and who closes the exhortation of which we speak, by asking things which, notwithstanding his talents, which I most sincerely recognize, betray (as regards God’s ways and specially

as to that which occupies us at this moment) an ignorance which we should have had difficulty to suppose in him. Here are his words: “When we see how evangelical Christians are firmly bound up in different denominations, we ask if this great union ‘of a single flock under a single shepherd’ shall ever take place on this earth before some future period yet enveloped in mystery; and if, as it were, to melt all these little bells of peculiar churches into one great bell of the universal Church of Christ, which by its majestic sounds may call the world to believe in Him whom the Father has sent, there be not needed an immediate intervention of Him who, in the day when He shall appear, shall be as the refiner’s fire?”

If we add withal the last paragraph of the Report, which calls for the coming of Jesus in the words of the Apocalypse, chapter 22, to come and dwell in the midst of the Church, as He who alone can increase in the midst of us cordial affection, I ask of those who have sober and thoughtful ideas on the revelations of the word of God, What can we think of a declaration which binds together the passages which he quotes, with the desire of merging the separate churches into the universal Church of Christ on the earth, and of producing that great union of a single flock under a single shepherd, to call the world to believe in Him whom the Father has sent? And without speaking of details, I ask if it is not to ignore the first elements of the revelation of God, such as we have it in the word, to confound grace with judgment, the gospel with the personal reign of Jesus, the glory with the patience of the saints and the grace of God, heaven with earth?

And in a critical and serious moment they present themselves to lead us, as if they possessed the intelligence of the ways of God. And they do it while expressing thoughts in which an incredible confusion prevails.

Is this a thing to command our confidence towards those who come forward to raise and set up again that which is fallen, and to give a direction to the movement of the day?

Yes, it is a question of raising up again and re-establishing not only elders but the flock of God, over which, according to them, these elders are to be placed. They do not deny that what has resulted from the first establishment of elders is under the power of the enemy. They make a new church, a new presbytery, a presbytery so new that they have set up a preparatory commission to know how they should proceed in it. What can I see there but a sect with greater pretensions than others?

They begin the thing. Those who lay on hands, whence come they? Is it the old clergy who will do it? Can everybody do it? This is important; for it is an authority in question so necessary and so obligatory, that without it elders could not exist nor the faithful obey.

Chapter 7.

For myself I am not in this difficulty. The Apostle Peter speaks of elders in a way which by no means implies the idea of an official nomination. “The elders who are among you I exhort, who am also an elder.” In like manner he adds, “Likewise ye younger [presbuterois, neoteroi] submit yourselves unto the elder,” 1 Pet. 5:1, 5.

In Acts 15 we find also in the assembly at Jerusalem elders, whose appointment is nowhere related, but who are there on the footing on which Peter expressly put them in his epistle.

I find, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, leaders recognized in their work. So that I doubt not at all, that in the midst of Christians of a Jewish origin the eldership was but a moral matter.

In the First Epistle to the Thessalonians I see that the apostle charges the faithful to take knowledge of those who were working amongst them and who went before them, and exhorts them to esteem them much for their work's sake; a motive more moral than dependent on their age, although I doubt not this entered into it, save in exceptional cases.

In the Epistle to the Romans I see persons who go before, faithful ones who in that sense were at the head of others, and who in their turn are exhorted to acquit themselves of it with diligence, in the same way that he had told the Hebrews that they watched over their souls.

We read in the First Epistle to the Corinthians 16:15: "I beseech you, brethren (ye know the house of Stephanas that it is the firstfruits of Achaia and that they have addicted [devoted themselves in a formal manner] themselves to the ministry of the saints), that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us and laboureth."

I have then in the word of God very clear authorities for recognizing those who are in the position in question; I have rules for my conduct with regard to them, and for their conduct in the midst of the flock. I profit by them; and the flocks are called to profit by them. They can do

so without pretending to be the flock of God,208whilst a great number of the faithful remain still outside their meeting, and that number among those perhaps who would be elders in reality if all were assembled; and they can do so without falsifying their position in the very serious way which would be the case if they pretended to be that which they are not. They can do it without setting up that which God would put aside if He accomplished a complete work, for that would make them into a sect. They can enjoy according to God, all that God has given them, without denying the state of ruin of the visible Church—a state which has brought ruin on every side and the forgetfulness of which shews, alas! that the conscience is not reached by that which is near to the heart of Christ, and which ought to be to us deeply painful. The author of the tract “Are Elders to be established?” denies the possibility of obedience to the passages which we have just quoted.

I am thoroughly convinced that the foundation thus laid in the word is the surest foundation, and that the walk which is directed according to this is the true walk. Thus, I can respect, according to the measure of their labour, those who are not fully manifested in the way demanded for the office, and without elevating, in a manner hurtful to himself, to a position which he cannot fill to the profit of others, one who does not possess all the qualities demanded for the charge.

To demand the establishment of elders, is at once to plunge oneself into all sorts of questions on the subject of their establishment; our powerlessness must be hidden under fine phrases; and then we fall into a labyrinth of gropings which always end in a clergy.

Who will choose them? Who will establish them? Who will lay on hands? If every one is not agreed, there is a new sect. From the beginning brethren have acted according to the principle which I have drawn as above from the word of God. Perhaps in some places they do not draw from these passages the profit which they might. I think, besides, that in proportion to the fall of the Church the elders came more into prominence. But since that, all is changed. The proposal is to begin anew; and the official nomination raises the question of knowing who will do it, a question to which the word of God will only give you answer by making you feel the absence of those whose authority could resolve it. Not that they resolved it by a revelation (we possess this entire), but by an authority which had been confided to them, and which you do not possess. The pretension of exercising it is either the yoke of popery, or the disorder of some who impose on others and only on those that follow them.

Beside, are they agreed among themselves?

Far from that. If one consults them, I know not which to listen to. One tells me that all is free—that the word is no rule. Another tells me, it so completely is a rule that I can only obey by naming elders. A third tells me, Pastors and elders are the same thing. No, says a fourth; I assure you that the examination of the word shews the contrary. A fifth declares that the Greek word, which means to choose, means to make others vote. This is a mistake, cries a sixth.

At last the conversation is ended by telling me, that if I do not join them I am disobedient and schismatic.

Whom am I to join, pray?

All of us.

On what principle?

We are all agreed.

On what?

To have elders named and to condemn you.

Now I understand: only I ask what authority the word gives to your acts.

It must be done! it must be done!

At last then I understand you; I forgive you, and I pray for you.

Meanwhile, I obey the word in recognizing those who have the rule over us; and I do not pretend to do that which you are pretending to do, without even being agreed amongst yourselves on what the word has said as to this subject, without even being agreed as to whether what it says about it has any authority.

Although they may have not been named, I can recognize those who do a good work, and I would even recognize them in their work, although they had entered thereon irregularly, and although the pretension of reconstituting the Church places them in a position which we cannot recognize as belonging to them.

172 Geneva, 1849.

173 The root of the question is not a new one. It is the same principle as that of M. Rochat with respect to the establishment of elders. What is new is, that along with this, they would have a church more or less composed of the multitude of professing Christians. The consequence of that is, that discipline is indirectly put aside, and that,

whilst earnestly seeking to preserve a clerical position for themselves, there is an irritable feeling against the true Church for the multitude and against the true clergy, who have openly occupied the ground before them.

174 This is what the author of the tract “Are Elders to be established? “has loudly declared and professed before a great number of witnesses, in order to take advantage of that point of departure in the arguments by which he attacked, not so much the scriptural principles of the brethren present at the conference, as the writings published to explain and support them.

175 Note to translation.—For a long while they would not say the Evangelical Church of Geneva, but at Geneva, but I think (if my memory serves me) they adopted it afterwards.

176 Were it otherwise, I should certainly never have taken up the pen. I have always found that, as regards attacks made on me, the best course was to let them go on and pursue my own work. But, here the question of the Free Church and of the establishment of elders was put forward, with the accusation that brethren denied the authority of the word. These questions pre-occupy their minds. In answering them, I shall confine myself to that which is necessary to shew that the accusation is unfounded. Beyond the general question I should never have answered it. Nevertheless, the reader will find the answer consigned to a note, an answer, the contents of which have only to do with the subject in controversy.

177 I do not say the same person. Look, in the paper called “A Glance at Various Ecclesiastical Principles,” etc., at that which relates to the attacks of the Journal

“La Reformation.” In the blame which it has lately cast on the “Glance,” etc., this journal returns to the charge in these words: “Our answer is easy. Shew us the scripture itself which claims to be an ecclesiastical code, and attributes a universal and binding value to the words which may be contained in it on this subject. Shew us this and we yield. But wherefore give it a character to which it has no pretence?”

178 We shall see that it is to this question that the general views of the tract of our brother, M. Foulquier, apply. He maintains that God does not re-establish the primitive state of an order of things, when it has fallen to pieces in the hands of man. We will examine further on the answer of the anonymous author of the tract, “Are we to establish Elders?” whom, for the sake of brevity, we will designate as “The anonymous author.”

179 Notwithstanding the accusations of blasphemy directed against brethren, the Editor of “La Reformation” was not afraid to uphold his point in an article which this journal recently devoted to “A Glance,” etc.

180 The place of meeting of the so-called “brethren” in Geneva.

181 I do not doubt at this time that the question of the clergy was at the root of all this. But at that time I had no suspicion of it, and I only interested myself in it for the sake of peace amongst these brethren.

182 Amongst other things I did not recognize the principle of the election of pastors by the flock.

183 Note to translation.—This was peremptorily refused. And I declined acting, as the principle of clergy was thus deliberately insisted on.

184 This is very plainly the position of our brother, M. Foulquier. For he complains that the authority of the elders is made to rest solely on this nomination by men, when they say that without it they could not obey them. And without denying that at first they were officially set up, it is none the less a very evil principle to say, in the case where God had appointed them, that they could not obey them if man had not had a share in their appointment; for that is to substitute obedience on the ground of a human right for the spiritual and scriptural obedience of a new heart. I point out here an inconsistency which has been imputed to me, because, on the one hand, I desire to recognize them when manifested, and that, on the other hand, man has neither the discernment nor the authority necessary to nominate them. There is none. To recognize is a humble, fitting act—it is the duty of every believer, when he sees any work of God. To nominate, is an act of authority. When the thing is manifested, it needs no discernment, and I recognize it; but to exercise an act of authority in placing men in that position, I have need of discernment. If I find in a bad soil splendid harvests, or peace amongst a disturbed population, I at once recognize of course the good farmer, the able ruler. But to choose the manager of an estate or the president of a republic, I must needs understand agriculture or politics; further, I must know men; and finally, I must have the authority necessary thereto.

185 Is the Church capable, after abandoning its normal position and its primitive rules, after having committed

this sin, to re-enter as of right into that position and to re-establish all that the rules, long ago abandoned, had established, without taking account either of its failure or of the ruin consequent thereon?

The question, as I have stated it (and the whole is there) makes us understand without any difficulty the sentence of our brother, M. Foulquier. “Even had there been a positive commandment, I should not submit thereto, bearing in mind the state of the Church.” The form of the statement seems to me faulty, inasmuch as it gives an idea of a refusal of the will to submit; but its sense is very clear, namely, that the actual state of the Church does not suffer the accomplishment of that which such a commandment demands, if it exists in the word, and that in the case where, under the pretence of obedience, elders are pretended to be set up in compliance with such a commandment, he could not submit to it, because of the state of the Church—a reason expressed, moreover, by our brother in a thoroughly explicit manner. The authority of the word is nowise brought in question. That this expression might, for the moment, startle an upright soul, ignorant of what was in question, I can well understand: and. it would have been desirable that our brother, M. Foulquier, had paid attention to it. Nevertheless the sense is plain. The manuscript of our brother, M. Foulquier, published by the author of the tract, “Are Elders to be established?” alludes to the passage found fault with, to that which had been said in a public conference, and relates but a portion of it. Further, all are agreed with respect to what was said. Our brother, Foulquier, told me that he added, “It is but a re-establishment of the clergy.”

We must remember that those words, on the occasion on which they were so exclaimed against as blasphemous, were spoken at the end of a long discussion on the establishment of elders, as if there had been in the word of God a formal command to that effect. And it was after a discussion on details, on the question of ascertaining if any command to elect elders existed, that Foulquier said, “Even had there… bearing in mind the state of the Church.” However faulty the expression may have been (and I admit it), I scarcely understand for my part how, if any honestly desired to understand it, he could have misunderstood it, taking into account the subject which then occupied them, and the expressed reason, “bearing in mind the state of the Church.” At the very moment, our brother, M. Kaufmann, said that everyone knew that our brother, M. Foulquier, did not reject any command.

Having mentioned the tract “Are Elders to be established?” it is needful to give some statement about the facts.

In alluding to some circumstances, the knowledge of which casts a light necessary to the understanding of the question which we are speaking of, I confine myself to that which is rendered indispensable by the tract in question.

From the opening of his tract the author declares that M. Foulquier has read the manuscript which he answers in an assembly of persons who share, like F., the opinions of Mr. Darby, and he adds, “None of these persons to our knowledge either disavowed or contradicted it. This silence … authorises us perhaps to regard it as the more recent expression in Geneva of the principles of our brethren of L’Ile.”

This explains to us what the author means by an assembly, and his desire to make the responsibility of the manuscript of M. Foulquier recoil on brethren.

Here are the facts:—

This manuscript was never read either in the assembly of these brethren, or in any assembly, or in any meeting. Nor only this: the anonymous author had, in the presence of many persons with whom he sides, had conferences with some of these brethren, in which our brother, M. Guillaumet, who was occupied on this subject, had read a totally different treatise, intended to shew plainly the views of brethren on the point discussed. After the conferences the anonymous author had in his own hands the treatise of M. Guillaumet.

This is not all.

The anonymous author, returning on various occasions to the words of M. Foulquier, as unveiling the principles of the system and rendering the assembly of L'lle responsible for the principle which he pretended to have found there, and which he denounced as a great sin, one who had been the chief organ of brethren in the conferences addressed the following note to him:—

"I have just learnt, with much sorrow, that the expression dropped by M. Foulquier, in our last conference, and which is quite personal to him, has been hawked about by many and put forward as a principle, and not only that, but as the principle of the assembly. I declare solemnly, that it is a notable calumny, and that the brethren of L'lle walk leaning on the word of God and on nought but that word, rejecting all tradition and every human organization. And, further, our brother has explained to me the sense which he gives to his words, a

sense which is very far from resembling that which has been given them. He rejects not the command, but the application made of it. How great the difference! I beg you to give its due weight to this note with brethren, in order to reassure them concerning our brother Foulquier. Adieu! in Him who has said we should pardon seventy times seven times, and who always does it to usward."

This communication was made to the anonymous author long before the publication of his tract.

From the moment when the manuscript of Foulquier had fallen into his hands, he abandoned the treatise which had been read at the conference to occupy himself with this one. He published it, or if he will, he gave it a demi-publicity, without asking leave of M. Foulquier, without acquainting him of it, and stating without proof and without foundation that it had been read in an assembly of persons who shared the views of Mr. Darby, adding that no one had disavowed it or contradicted it.

As to the manuscript of our brother Foulquier, this is its origin and history:—

At the time when the brethren of L'lle refused to take part in the proposed conferences, a brother, M.L., went to M. Foulquier to persuade them to go there, adding that they would not be clear of the blood of their brethren if they refused to make known to them the light they thought they possessed. On account of those words, Foulquier, after the conferences, shewed to M.L. a manuscript of some pages, to shew his general idea of the ways of God in regard to this question. Later, M.L. asked him if he might shew it to others. Foulquier replied that he might shew it to any one he wished, and

that he, Foulquier, would do the same on his part. The anonymous author addressed himself to Foulquier himself on the subject of the words of which so much has been said, asking him at the same time if he followed the inspiration of the Spirit apart from the Bible. Foulquier replied. No; that he maintained nothing but that which he believed authorized by the word; that he did not know how to express himself as well as he could wish. But that as to the root of the matter, he could not withdraw any part of it, and that, whatever might be its form, the objections of the anonymous author would probably be nevertheless the same.

186 When I speak of finding fault, I have no doubt but that fault may be found also with my words, but the expression quoted having been made so public, it becomes needful to give it its true weight, and not to approve that of which God does not approve.

Thus far had already passed through the press, when I received from our brother, M. Foulquier, without my having in any way desired it, the following confession, entreating me to insert it in my tract. Many considerations made me hesitate to do so. Nevertheless, on the positive entreaty of our brother I did not feel myself at liberty to refuse his request. I confine myself then to yielding to his wish, without adding a single observation, but reserve to myself the right to express that which I think with regard to the whole matter, if the occasion demands it.

Here is what our brother, M. Foulquier, says:—

“I acknowledge before the Lord who gives me light, and before His Church, that I have often been the cause of stumbling to many brethren by the inexactness of my

words, and I ask pardon for them from all my brethren, publicly humbling myself for this evil which I have wrought, before Christ and all those who confess His name. I ask their prayers.

[Signed] “J. FOULQUIER.”

187 Here is the great lesson which we find at the beginning of the book of Samuel. The people failed in faithfulness, and this want of faithfulness, as is always the case, shews itself the most in that which is officially nearest to God. God is going to establish the only true remedy for the incapacity, in which man is, of keeping himself in the place of blessing. He is going to set up a Chief who cannot fall short of the glory of the Lord and who will assure the happiness of His people. It is the true King, the Christ. Before doing so, and before manifesting to the full the iniquity which rendered that necessary, or at least before exposing it in full daylight by judgment, God raises up the Spirit of prophecy, which communicates to His elect handmaid (the figure of a feeble remnant desponding and without strength) His power, which lifts up and shall exalt the horn of His Anointed. This grand fact changes all. Christ must be manifested as the support, the stay, of the blessing of His people. Then having shewn these things, God judges the priesthood, and assigns it its place before His Anointed. Nevertheless, He lets the iniquity of His people come to the full, by the contempt of prophecy and by the contempt of God Himself as the immediate King of His people. That is the history of the monarchy of Saul. It is not until the people have rejected God as their King, that the Lord puts into execution His counsels in the setting up of His Anointed. Still, as we well know, He placed the monarchy itself in the

responsible hands of men. We know what has been the result of it; and that God was obliged to say that Israel was no longer His people. At the taking of the ark, Ichabod was written upon that people, and on the priesthood whose place was before the ark. At the taking of Jerusalem, in consequence of the iniquity of the kings, Lo-ammi (not my people) was written on all that remained standing of the ruins of Israel. The anonymous author seeks thus a proof that God re-established the primitive state of what is fallen! And Nehemiah, did he re-establish it? Is the fact of being the slave of the Gentiles, of those fierce beasts, the object of the final judgment of God, and at the same time a manifestation of that which the judgment of God had poured out on that people whose King He had Himself been, is this a proof that God re-establishes the primitive state of what is in a falling condition? Let the conscience of a man, endued with spiritual intelligence, judge of it.

188 It is important also to remark here, that if, as the anonymous author affirms, Haggai did not prophesy before the altar had been set up again, Jeremiah nevertheless had previously announced the duration of the Babylonish power, that Daniel had understood the number of years at the end of which the desolations of Jerusalem were accomplished, and that he had received, as the answer on the part of God to his intercession, the revelation of what was to take place for the rebuilding of the city, for which Cyrus himself gives the order in these terms: “The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah.” Ezra 1:2. In that I have not the slightest doubt. This just man whom God had raised from the East (Isa. 41:2, 25; ch.

46:11-13), acted on behalf of Him who has said of Cyrus, “He is my shepherd and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.” God desired that the order should go forth from the place where He had placed the government of the earth (Dan. 2:37, 38) when he said, “Lo-ammi” to His people. Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the faith of the people in inviting them to build. The order for it had already been given, and given on the part of him, to whom God Himself, in consequence of die unfaithfulness of His people, had expressly confided the care of them.

The anonymous author must have forgotten all that part of the word. At least, he has not profited by it, and he did not know how to commit himself to the wisdom of Him who, on even this point, has confounded the iniquity of the Jews, who availed themselves of the fruit of their sin to perplex Him, in exhorting them to give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s. For, according to the providence of God, Caesar was the heir of Cyrus as regards the power of the world, if he was not the heir of his piety in recognizing the commands of the Lord.

189 See John 7:39; ch. 14:16, 17, and many other passages.

190 As to the absence of proofs drawn from the New Testament, for which the anonymous author reproaches the writing of Foulquier, a few words will suffice. The manuscript of Foulquier contains only a short statement of principles drawn up for a brother. The anonymous author had heard read in the conference a document which, while the work of a single brother, was clothed

with the character of being the answer on the part of all; a document furnished with proofs drawn from the New Testament and which is a recapitulation with quotations of all contained in Acts, and epistles bearing on the question of the ministry. At the request of the anonymous author this manuscript was handed to him and he examined it. Afterwards the writing of our brother M. Foulquier fell into his hands. These facts are the best answer to the accusation contained in the following words of his tract, p. 20: “Thus, dear brethren of L’Ile, you leave us no other alternative than to believe your word, or to suffer by our refusal the most terrible judgments of God!!! We ask of you examples of biblical commands and you give us human arguments.”

191 It is important that the reader should remember that the division of the tract of Foulquier into paragraphs is not his, and that frequently it injures the sense and cuts the thread of the ideas.

192 This is to contradict himself; for he insists here on the preservation of the institution. The fact is that the institution exists no longer. But we may use the word “preserve “in an equivocal manner, because the institution is mentioned in the Bible, which is of everlasting authority. In fact, that of which the Bible speaks, exists no longer. There cannot be a better proof, than that the anonymous author is compelled at this time to establish it anew.

193 This was not the mission of Timothy, but we will touch on this later. It is historically very probable that the decline of piety caused the institution of elders to become more prominent.

194 When he says, he will believe until the dear brethren expressly deny it, that these brethren direct themselves by the Holy Ghost in the absence of the testimony of the word; the answer to it is this: At the moment when he was writing those lines, he had already for some time in his hands the formal denial which he demands; and as a proof, in a long letter in answer to this denial he complains of the strength of the expressions in which this denial was couched. The letter, which contains this denial, is in a previous note.

195 This argument has so much the more power that in Acts 14 it is the apostles themselves who appoint the elders.

196 This is what I said in my answer to M. Rochat. I take a similar case. My son is chosen a counsellor of state, and I write to him to explain to him how one ought to behave oneself in the affairs of the state. This shews3 according to M. Rochat's way of reasoning, that every citizen may at any time exercise the function of a counsellor of state, because I have told my son how one ought to behave oneself, etc.

197 Since the beginning (I quote this as an historical fact), those who amongst brethren- occupied themselves with souls and looked after them, met together in order that they might do so under the oversight of the Lord, and still do so when the opportunity offers. In places where circumstances have weakened this work I have always sought to give it energy.

198 It is, as I think, a bad translation to say "In order that thou mayest know how one should conduct oneself," etc. It might have an appearance of exactness; but in following the spirit of the two languages, this translation

does not give the sense: The Greek does not express the word “oneself.” It would be more correct to say, “In order that thou mayest know how to conduct thyself,” or “what conduct is fitting in the house of God.” So it is instruction for Timothy’s conduct in the Church, although Timothy had to be occupied with the conduct of others. “That thou mayest know how others ought to conduct themselves,” would be complete nonsense if he was speaking of any other thing than overseeing.

199 I repeat here that part of my writings which the anonymous author quotes, namely, that to imitate the apostles is not to obey. He quotes that to shew that we may do the same things that they did without being authorized, and consequently in the way we like and without being bound to imitate them. It is wresting my words in a manner unbecoming so grave a subject. I say that to imitate the apostles is to pretend to act with the same authority as they did, and that is not obedience. And the author makes use of these words to shew that we can do it, and do it at our pleasure, according to our views.

200 It is the same word which we noticed in Romans 12.

201 Our adversaries, driven to an extremity, have wanted to persuade us that Paul and Barnabas were not even apostles. The Spirit of God calls them so in their first voyage (Acts 14:27). And Paul insists on his apostolate as being independent of all human instrumentality: “not by man.” Also we can see in 1 Corinthians 9:6 the place which he gives to Barnabas, as well as that which he gives to himself.

202 If I am not wrongly informed, our author has given us to understand that the new edition of the translation

of Lausanne will give “to establish by imposition of hands.” I cannot believe it; but if it be so, it would be to falsify the meaning of the word. There is some appearance that later, at the time when the clerical system displayed itself, this word had been clothed with the sense that they wish here to give it.

203 The anonymous author calls Mr. Wolff to the support of his assertion by saying that those who appeal to Acts 14:23 are ignorant that the translation is bad, adding, “See as to this matter, ‘Le Ministere,’ by Wolff, p. 20.” I confess I do not understand this. Mr. Wolff rejects, as I do also, the words “by the suffrages of the assemblies”; and insists upon it, that it had no reference to making their vote, and that the apostles had themselves alone established elders. The words, “they had ordained them elders,” exclude even the idea that the flock had taken part in it. The fact is plainly that the Greek word, which means choose, elect, means, first, to vote by raising the hand; then, in general, to elect. The apostles chose the elders for the churches.

204 This sentence is made available— “also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things”—as if these words were applicable to the elders, to whom Paul was speaking. But it is plain that “of your own selves” is applicable to all the Christians of that place. To make oneself sure of it one need only read verse 29, “grievous wolves shall enter in among you.” The words “among you” mark clearly the Christians of whom the elders were in charge; and these words “of your own selves shall men arise” are in contrast with the fact that some should enter within from without, and they apply equally to Christians. For this cause elders should watch, and watch not against themselves. And when the apostle

says “I ceased not to warn every one,” he does not mean to say that he warned the elders only. Thus the arguments, by which he would insinuate that the elders only are meant in the word “you” employed in this passage, are absolutely powerless.

205 The bodies formed in Switzerland.

206 Setting Congregationalism aside, there is no difference between the principles put forward by these gentlemen and those of Mr. Rochat. That which the anonymous author and Mr. Merle said has been said by Mr. Rochat, only with less pretension. See Mr. Rochat’s tract entitled, “Answer to the Anonymous Author’s Tract, etc.” page 14-18.

207 I have never read anything more thoroughly similar to the pretensions of Rome than pages 36 and 37 of the “Report” of Mr. Merle.

208 I have no objection to the flock being called “church,” save the fear that, in imitation of ancient dissent, the idea might be allowed that it is the church of the place. The word recognizes all the Christians of one place as forming the church of that place.

Examination Of A Few Passages Of Scripture,

The Force of Which has been Questioned in the Discussion on the New Churches; with Remarks on Certain Principles Alleged in Support of their Establishment209 The publication of these pages has been somewhat delayed, although the manuscript was ready some months ago. The anchor had always hoped to take it himself to Geneva and superintend the printing of it; but beside the impossibility of realizing this intention at the time, sickness and other circumstances came in, and the publication was thus again adjourned.

If this tract is now printed, it is because the author considers that what helps to understand the passages of the word is never out of season, and he presents but little else in these remarks.

The reader may perhaps perceive that the pamphlet entitled “The Seven Proceedings of Mr. Darby,” was, in part, the occasion of the publication of this one. But I must warn him that he will find no answer to the attacks which fill the pages of “The Seven Proceedings.” I do not answer them, because, first, It is meet the Christian should bear with insults; secondly, Those who take the trouble to read my pamphlets, can easily judge of what is said in them,210 and I cannot take into account the judgment of those who do not read them; thirdly, It seemed to me that attacks of this kind do not deserve an answer. Nevertheless, I have examined each accusation, in writing my answer, in order to make all clear to myself, and I have found nothing to alter, except a few things corrected farther on. And finally, I felt that a

personal debate can be profitable neither to the Church of God, nor to any one else. It is true that there are a few facts wanting to explain the history of this matter; but I think people will be thankful that I do not revert to them. If there be some humiliation for some brethren, which might be removed by speaking of them, I doubt whether they would be gainers by it, before God. A complete silence will therefore be found with regard to all these things. Farther on, I shall give my authority for one single fact. But there are a few scriptural questions at the end of the pamphlet in question, which call for some explanations that I will give here. I avail myself of this opportunity to acknowledge two or three things in "Scriptural Views" which need to be either corrected or explained; and at the same time I repeat the expression of my convictions as to the main point of the question. First, I think it would have been more exact, chronologically, to say "son of Zerubbabel."211 This latter name is prominent in the Book of Nehemiah, as that of a descendant of David and heir of his claim to the throne of Israel; and I had not paid attention to the dates which lead to the thought that he was dead. The argument loses none of its force by this alteration, even if it were the grandson of Zerubbabel. The force of the reasoning depends on this, that it is the heir of the rights of the family of David.

Then it is denied that what is called the Evangelical Church at Geneva is a national church. In the passage blamed, the word "national" is used with respect to all free churches in general. At bottom, I find no moral difference as to the Evangelical Church of Geneva; but I here take note of the protest made in its favour, reserving my own convictions as to the moral value of

the difference, and I ought to have made the exception in my pamphlet. Circumstances also have prevented those who left the national system in France from choosing the form they would have desired. The movement has taken the form I had predicted in my pamphlet, so that it would be needful also to have made an exception for the new French system. There is nothing else, as far as I am aware of, which I have to correct. I give a passage of the letter which authorized my saying that the author of “Are Elders to be established?” issued the Guillaumet paper to answer that of Foulquier, so that one may not think that I asserted these things inconsiderately. The letter is from the author to Mr. Foulquier. Here is the passage:

“I have scarcely had time to copy a few passages of it [of the Guillaumet manuscript]. I was just occupied with refuting these passages in the revised text that I was preparing of the notes read in the conference at my house, when your tract was handed over to me. As soon as I met with the sad declaration ‘If even,’ etc., I laid aside my first paper, and at once began writing a refutation of your tract.”

I fully maintain all I said of the clergy, of elders, of Romanism, and in general all, except what I have just corrected, but without any desire of wounding any one. I will explain the passage which might produce that effect. I never said, nor thought for an instant (and I need hardly mention it), that the elders named at Geneva were impostors; but I said, “Who only deceive those who follow them.” This is what I meant—that they impose their authority as elders, without being true elders according to God; that the pretension to be an elder, because one has been chosen and named, is a

false pretension, which only deceives those who follow the persons who pretend to be elders. I confess I look upon this pretension to be an elder as false. Those persons, doubtless very good brethren and men, are no more elders for having been named as they have been, than any one you please of the inhabitants of Geneva; and it is very proper this should be understood. One cannot assume official authority in the Church at one's own will, or by a mutual understanding so to do. If the expression I used means more than that, I withdraw it. I have no desire to employ even the appearance of insult. The old clergy had the excuse of hereditary prejudice; the new have nothing but false pretensions. Such is my conviction; but, while expressing it in the clearest and strongest way (and that is what I wish to do), I desire also to avoid all that might wound; and if the expression may have wounded the susceptibility of any one, I withdraw it, asking him with all my heart to forgive me.

But you, my brethren, who have agreed with others who follow you to give yourselves this title, you will not avoid the discussion of the validity of that which you have assumed. We ask you for the proofs of your special authority, for the vouchers. Who is it that named you? Who is it that authorized you to take that title? Who discerned your qualifications? Whence comes the authority you pretend to in the house of God? How would you exercise it towards any one who might dispute it? When such men as Paul, Timothy (if it was so in his case), and Titus had with apostolical authority established elders in the churches, if the authority of these elders were disputed, it was disputing the apostolical authority that had placed them there. But as regards you, who made you elders? Except it be with

revolutionists, authority flows from authority. Thus it was in the Church. Christ named apostles. The apostles named elders. Who is it that named you? Who is it that communicated to you your authority? You know, and you cannot deny, that the apostles and their special delegates established elders at the beginning. You ask for proof “that this was forbidden to any others.” Is it thus that one can assume authority? If the right of naming public functionaries was exercised by the king in a state of which he was the sovereign, could each one name as he chose, over a small portion of the citizens, because there was nothing in the laws declaring that none else had a right to make them? Who would listen to such nonsense? Well! it is much more serious and much worse to do so in the things of God. One would not dare to say or to do such things in human society. Alas! one dares everything in the Church of God.

Have you a real authority from God over His flock, an authority which you can use over the whole flock? If not, you are the heads of a sect. You are not the elders of the flock of God; but you only bear this title as from those who would have you. It is absolutely and exclusively the will of man that is the source of your authority, and without that will you neither pretend to exercise it, nor to possess it: the moment it is not accepted, it is powerless. For, abandoning it, one only abandons what one has created oneself. It is said that I am seeking for apostolical succession; it is not so at all. I seek for the existence of the authority which conferred upon you your own. Where is it? You tell me the institution subsists. Where? In the word, you tell me. Doubtless, there were elders then; but as for you, say what you please, you are not an institution. Who is it that placed

you in the position to which you pretend? That is the question. Tongues we find in the word, and miracles, and we find apostles also. Do those things now subsist because we find their existence at that time recorded in the word? As a fact, the institution of elders does not subsist; this one cannot deny. They act on a revolutionary principle in the Church of God in creating authorities, however perfect the model they would copy in establishing them. I said they wished to have a clergy: where ministry is limited, where authorities, officially recognized, are found, there is a clergy, because ministry becomes a separate caste. According to die word, the members of the body of Christ act according to the energy which is communicated to them from above, each in its place, subject to the discipline prescribed by the word, and to the rules given there; and they exercise their ministry in the whole body, according as God has dealt to each. In a clerical sect, ministry is limited to those who are officially recognized in its bosom. By courtesy those who are elsewhere in a similar position may be received; but those persons officially recognized in the sect itself form the recognized ministry of that sect. Take the different systems, National, Independent, Baptist, Wesleyan, the Free Church of the Canton de Vaud; the principle is recognized in them. Take the constitution of what calls itself the “Evangelical Church at Geneva,” there also the thing exists, as clearly as possible. It “recognizes the necessity of a special ministry, as an institution of God and a permanent want of the Church; consequently, it has elders and deacons.” Such is its ministry. Do these elders and deacons form the ministry of another body of Christians? Clearly not. The thing is still more Umited when it is said, “A distinct part of them [the elders] are

the ministers of the word, who, prepared by holy studies, are more specially called to teaching and preaching." What difference is there between this and the clergy elsewhere? It is a separate caste. That this will subsist long practically, is what I do not believe, because the principle of a clergy is according to the heart of man, and one will never communicate to these laymen elders' authority over souls, which one cannot give them as from God. This is the principle I oppose. I think indeed, and I repeat it, that it is to deny the authority of Christ over His own house. There are three other important principles which I wish to point out to the reader before considering the passages I have to examine: principles which are in question in the formation of the different new churches. First, as to discipline at Geneva, I beg every sincere Christian to examine the printed constitution. I do not pretend to judge assurances given verbally in die midst of their assemblies; but I have before me their public profession of principles, and it is without controversy that discipline is either brotherly reproof, or, in extreme cases, the absolute authority of the presbytery, plain and open absolutism. The Church has no part in it, except submission. There is no discipline exercised for the purifying of the conscience of the Church, as Paul could say, "Ye have approved yourselves clear in this matter," 2 Cor. 7:11. It is true that they do not add "and not otherwise." So that, according to the principle on which they chose their elders, leaving aside Paul and Titus, all the brethren may exercise discipline without looking to the elders and presbytery named in the rules, and take no account of them, without the least infraction of the rules. The absence of the "not otherwise" leaves the door open to every possible mode of acting, and the

article preserves all its force and value… the institution subsists. Unless it be on this principle, discipline is either simply brotherly reproof or the absolute authority of the clergy. According to the word, pastors, elders, may enlighten the conscience of the brethren, counsel them, exercise a scriptural influence that the body may walk according to God; but according to the word it is the conscience of the Church which is brought into activity, it is the Church that removes from its midst the wicked person. The constitution of Geneva settles the matter quite differently, and the very explanations, which overthrow the article of the constitution, are themselves also contrary to the word. The elders pronounce after having informed the Church. The conscience of the Church has nothing to do with it.

There are two more points which I wish to treat briefly, as being general principles of importance, which may exercise the heart on the occasion of the formation of these new churches.

The first point with which I shall occupy my reader, is that of the idea of union on the principle of mutual concession with respect to the divers views which are found among Christians, and of conciliation by these means. This principle has a great repute and a very fair appearance; but it is profoundly evil and presumptuous. It supposes that the truth is at our disposal. Philippians 3 teaches quite a different principle: there is no idea of concession nor of any arrangement in expressing the truth so as to reconcile different views. It is said, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.” It is not, Let us lower down the truth to the measure of him who has not come up to it; it is not two persons ignoring which of the two has the truth, or content to suppose the

possibility of error in giving up more or less what they hold, in order to express themselves so as to be agreed: all that is an infringement upon the authority of the truth on us. “And if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.” There is no question here of concessions, but of the revelation from God to enlighten him who is not perfect in the truth. “Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.” There is no question here of concessions, but of walking together in the things we possess, with regard to which, because recognized as being the truth of God, there is no giving up anything, all being subject to it. In that case, there is no concession, either on one side or on the other, for all possess the same truth, having already attained to it in a measure, and they walk together minding the same thing. The remedy for the diversity of mind which may remain is not to make concessions (how deal thus with the truth?) but the revelation from God in favour of him who is ignorant, as we are all of us on divers points.

But I shall be told, On that footing, one will never come to an agreement. Where will you find in the word such a thing as coming to an agreement? To come to an agreement is not the unity of the Church of God. The truth is not to be modified, and we are not called to force our imperfect views on anyone. I must have faith, and one must have the same faith, to walk together; but in the things received as the truth of God by faith, I can make no concession; I may bear with ignorance, but I cannot arrange the truth to please another. You will tell me, In that case, how walk together? Why lay down grounds of unity which require either unity of views, or

so evil a thing as concession on such or such a truth? As to the things on which we possess the truth, and with regard to which we have faith, we have the same mind, we walk in them together. If I acquire some knowledge more, I bear with the ignorance of my brother, until God reveals the thing to him. Our unity is in Christ Himself. If unity depends on concessions, it is only a sect founded on human opinions, because the principle of the absolute authority of the truth is lost. They will tell me, that true Christians will never yield on fundamental points. I was going to say "I understand"; but it is not so. There are many who are agreed in spite of the errors which affect the foundations; I know that others would not; but this does not prevent the fact that the principle of concessions is in nowise authorized in the word, denies the authority of the truth on us, and pretends to be able to dispose of it for the sake of peace.212 The word supposes the bearing with ignorance, but never concessions, because it does not suppose that men could make a rule different from itself, in order to come to an agreement. I receive a man "weak in the faith"; but I do not yield anything to him as to the truth, even on such a point as eating herbs; I might perhaps deny essential truths by so doing. Such a case may happen, where to observe days might lead to doubt of the Christianity of him who does it. (See Galatians 4:9-11.) There might be another case where I could only say, On this very point, "let every man be fully persuaded," Rom. 14:5, 6, etc. Sometimes the whole of Christianity depends upon something which can be borne with in other points of view; Gal. 2:1-4. I repeat, there is no trace in the word of a system which suppresses a part of the truth so as to have a common confession, but the contrary. There was the perfect truth, and God revealed what was wanting,

when it was otherwise. They were of one mind and they walked together, and there was no need of concessions. One did not pretend to such things as required them; that is, the Bible does not suppose what one has the pretension to do. It is to mutilate the truth that it may be adopted by many. The word, therefore, and especially Philippians 3, condemns this arrangement of mutilated truth, with a view to get them to be adopted by everyone; for this is to dishonour God and His truth. These are means for forming a sect, composed of those who are agreed on the points laid down as grounds of union. It is never the unity of the Church of God; it will be an orthodox sect, if they are agreed on fundamental points, yet always a sect, even if it should take in a greater part of a nation, because it is a body formed on the agreement to which men have come on certain truths; but it is not the unity of the Church of God. In a confession of faith there is no question of bearing with individuals who are ignorant on certain points, nor of acknowledging together that one is lacking as to the knowledge thereof nor of enlightening those who are so; but of declaring the truth one possesses, that others may, by agreeing with that declaration, join themselves to such as have adopted it as a ground of union. That all may adopt it, the profession of the truth must be reduced to the measure of ignorance of all those who come in, if they are sincere in that profession; but that is not bearing with others, but persons, as I have said, who dispose of the truth of God by a human compromise. Is that the unity of the Spirit?

And, again, pay attention to this. If I know the truth and make a concession so as to unite myself to others in a common profession, my concession is just simply

yielding the truth to him who will not have it. If I, with others, make concessions because we only have opinions and are ignorant of the truth, or have no certainty as to it, what a monstrous pretension to lay down, in that state of ignorance, a rule to be imposed on others as a ground of the unity of the Church, under penalty of not forming part of it I I may be told, But, instead of this, you impose your views, as being sure of the truth. Not at all; because I believe in a unity which already exists, the unity of the body of Christ, of which every Christian forms part; whereas you establish union on views on which you have come to an agreement. You will tell me, You are indifferent then as to the truth. No; but you have used improper means to guard it, by imposing the profession of a part of the truth as a basis of unity. Some Christians in Paris, already in the truth, as I suppose—these brethren in Paris are gathered on the ground of the unity of the body of Christ. By the power of the Holy Ghost and by discipline the body is guardian of the truth as of holiness. If any one upholds error and we have been unable to make him give up that error, he is not received or he is excluded. It is a duty towards Christ, Head of the Church, and towards His sheep dear to His heart. If it be only ignorance, one bears with it, and one seeks to enlighten. That discipline may be exercised with the divine wisdom which the word supplies, and in the manner as well as in the measure, for which it gives us the necessary instructions. What I complain of is, that men have substituted another unity for the unity of the body of Christ, and thus a truth which is not secondary is compromised, and the true unity is rendered impossible. We shall see presently the proofs of this.

See under what conditions I may take part in the union at Geneva. I must accept their system of elders, the popular choice of authorities in the Church of God by majorities, not to repeat what I have said on discipline and on the clergy. These are conditions which must precede. If I believe these things to be contrary to the word, I must force my conscience or withdraw. In France, one must accept a system of delegates, synods, church-inspection, a synodal committee, voting by majority which binds the churches, a proportional majority in certain cases. Suppose I believe that the principle which requires of us to decide in the things of God by majorities, is an utterly carnal principle (necessary in human things, but-an abomination in the Church, since the Spirit must reign there, and two spiritual men may be right in face of a whole crowd), here am I, if I do not accept a principle which to my mind denies the authority of the Holy Ghost, excluded from the unity of what is called the Church of France. It is impossible for anyone who believes in the Church and its unity, and who believes that the Holy Ghost has any authority in the Church of God, to accept such a system. And I pray the reader to observe here, how closely practice is connected with doctrine, and how those who are ignorant of a doctrine may act with great sincerity in establishing a common walk for Christians, without suspecting that they interfere with dogmas of the highest importance. There is no doctrine of greater importance, after the eternal foundations of truth have been laid, than the unity of the Church and the presence and authority of the Holy Ghost in the Church; it is a vital doctrine for these times— the importance of which can scarcely be exaggerated. Now it is evident that a system of delegation, majority of votes, a synodal

committee, with regulations for not re-electing immediately all the members of the latter, is a complete denial of the authority of the Holy Ghost. It is founded on human rights and arranged to meet the fear of human jealousies. If I believe in the unity of the body of Christ and the authority of the Holy Ghost, can I join that which binds me to such a system? Again, is it according to the word, or is it a human principle, that churches have rights in virtue of the number of their members? “Member of a church” is not a scriptural idea: a Christian is a member of the body of Christ. The doctrine of the Church, of the unity of the body of Christ, is wanting; and men have replaced it by a system of agreement in fundamental views and of synodal authority. And far are they in practice from having the idea of laying down a basis which would take in all Christians, that if the principle of the profession of the faith is not accepted, the best Christian must remain outside (Archives, Sept. 8.) And this profession of the faith must be exactly according to the creed inserted in the constitution, for all the churches must adhere to that one.213 Here is the defence of this system: “Every one who was desirous of making for that union every sacrifice that can be reconciled with conscience and faithfulness. Here the concessions were genuine, for the question was not to reconcile that which is irreconcilable, the yea and nay on fundamental and distinctive doctrines of Christianity; but to reconcile different views on secondary questions of application and of ecclesiastical government—questions with regard to which the most upright mind and the most scrupulous conscience can consent to submit.”

Here is an answer taken from the same journal (Aug. 25): “Yes; they have made of the Church, and of sound doctrine, secondary truths. Our secondary truths are always those which demand our acting and our sacrifices.” I leave aside sound doctrine as not being in question here. It is agreed that the Church is not a secondary truth.

Here again is a way of testing the thing. “We will tell you the only way to get yourself expelled: Pass on from theory to application. The worldly churches bear with theory, but are very sensitive as to practice. The world knows very well how to distinguish between what threatens it and what serves it. Make orthodox discourses, but do not touch upon any point of discipline.” I have these two points here: the Church is not a secondary truth, and to bring that to the test you must come to practice, to application. Now the unity of all those who are members of Christ, and that by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, is the scriptural doctrine of the Church. Orthodox thoughts will easily be admitted on this point; but touch upon discipline, ask that Mr. Ponson be recognized as member of this union of churches; he cannot be. He is recognized to be a brother. There is nothing to reproach him with, it would appear, whether with regard to his doctrine or his conduct; but the whole synod, without exception, has accepted fundamental grounds, laid down by the Circular of March 31, which have excluded him.214 So that it is not enough to be a Christian, known to be such in doctrine and practice; one must besides be a member —not of Christ but of a church—adhere to the constitution voted in Paris, to the principle of voting and deciding by a majority, and to a crowd of other

principles. If I cannot accept all that (things which render impossible the unity of the body of Christ), I am excluded from the system. A nationalist is made to say, The Bible condemns a sectarian spirit; it commands us to manifest before all the union of brethren, and to bear with the weak; but it is useful to maintain for the present the divided state. … “Sacred interests would be compromised if we were too obedient.” Do not these words apply to the synod? Those sacred interests here mentioned are the principles of the Circular of March 4. Outside these, no union. However fine these words may sound, concession and reconciliation, it is a fatal and presumptuous principle. If I accept the unity of the Church of God, I do not need that principle, the weak of the faith are of the Church, and I bear with their weakness; the Bible is my measure; a perfect measure, capable of rendering the man of God “perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” Unity of views, however desirable, is not necessary to that unity. The body of Christ is one, and whatever be the degree of progress, the Christian is of the body. As a profession of faith, we do not want anything less perfect than the Bible, because we possess the unity which is according to God, without seeking to make one according to man. There are those who, having no idea of the Church of God, will only have the Bible to be enabled only to profess that which reason accepts. Others, to put a barrier to that licentiousness, make professions of faith, to gather people according to those ideas. What is wanting is the unity of the Church of God, which possesses the whole truth, which is the “pillar and the ground of the truth,” as the Bible is its perfect rule.

The last principle I would point out, to which I have already alluded, and which has been largely insisted on for some years past, and which has recently been put forward in a particular way, is this: That which is not prohibited is allowed; or else one must find the words "not otherwise" joined to what is said in the Bible; if not, we may do the jhing quite differently. Now the Bible, as far as I know, never says this. Certainly we do not find it in the New Testament, so that it is evident that all that is written therein furnishes no rule of conduct whatever; because, if when there is a walk traced out in the Bible one may act otherwise unless one finds the phrase "not otherwise" it is evident that there is in it no obligatory direction (that is, that the biblical directions and walk are nothing as authority). You cannot find a more iniquitous principle. People felt themselves without any authority in the word for a certain mode of acting; they spoke of a commandment; but after all, they felt that all that was alleged could not serve as a foundation to what they were building. Sometimes they will say that the word has not force of law. Sometimes they will not have a Gospel-code; and finally they do things as they please, alleging that the word has not said "not otherwise." Let the Christian understand fully what this walk is, in order to brand it with all his spiritual might. This is what forms the basis of the whole Romish system. The word does suffice for our direction. If we find things done in a certain way, an authority committed to certain persons, we are quite as free to do it in another way, and to exercise the authority although it has not been committed to us, because it is not said "not otherwise." For instance, here is what we are told with regard to the elders named at Geneva. They cannot deny that the apostle and his delegates did establish the elders. What

are we to do now that the one or the others are no longer here? “We challenge our brethren to quote one single text where the Holy Ghost commands clearly to establish elders through the ministry of the apostles or their delegates, and not otherwise.” We do indeed find some which clearly say that it was the apostle or his delegates, and the latter with the apostolical authority. We have even proved that, in biblical history, the thing is not done otherwise; and that, when the opportunity presented itself for doing so in Crete, the apostle followed the order which is pointed out; he did not commit this task to the Church, but he left Titus to do this as well as some other things which required apostolical authority. That is to say, the biblical mode of acting is very clearly marked out: we cannot mistake the principle that directed it; and now people stand up to tell us that they will do it quite otherwise, and in a way in which the apostle did not think fit to do it, because it is not said “and not otherwise.” What could not be done with such a principle? Where is the prohibition to carry the sacrament in procession? Where do we find that which forbids confessing sins to a priest? for it is said, “Confess your faults one to another,” and it is not added “and not otherwise.” If the Church is to remove the wicked person from its midst, why could it not be done by act of authority on the part of the clergy, since it is not said “and not otherwise”? Why not have acolytes, sub-deacons, patriarchs, archdeacons, popes? Let us remember that, in point of fact, in the case which gave rise to the discussion of this horrid principle, it is a question of a pretension of an immense scope, namely, the authority to name the officers in the house of God, and even over all the brethren; for if it is not this, they are not elders established by the Holy Ghost over the

flock of God. And I would say by the way (for I wish to confine myself to general principles), this horrid principle is the only basis of the whole building of the new system at Geneva; for it is as clear as daylight, that, if the word really authorized what they have done, they would not have had recourse to this argument, that it was not forbidden to do otherwise.

They have judged their own cause. They have had the pretension to confer authority in the Church of God on certain persons, and they have been told: You have not that authority; you have had the pretension to create elders and you cannot— they are not really elders. If you have that authority, shew it. In answer, they shew the authority in the hands of Paul, of Timothy, of Titus. We reply to them: But you are neither Paul, nor Timothy, nor Titus. Then comes the fatal principle: But it is not said "and not otherwise!"

Such then is the foundation of the authority which is exercised in that which is called the Evangelical Church at Geneva.

After all, to say that a direction given to a superior authority to know how one ought to conduct oneself in the sphere of his action confers on everyone to arrogate to himself that authority, even as a matter of obedience, would be too absurd a pretext to be put forward; and they feel it in spite of themselves, if it were not a question of justifying, when the thing is done, what is required by the principle we are now discussing, viz., that the absence of this "not otherwise "leaves everything free— a principle which sweeps away all that is said in the word, because we may do quite otherwise, without there being an infraction of the rule that is

found in it and of the mode of action which is followed in it.

I come now to the discussion of a few passages of scripture.

There is a case of small importance, but I shall notice it, since it is a question of the word. The application of Isaiah 63:14, and of Nehemiah 11:20, is perfectly right. It has been alleged that the Spirit was given after the captivity in a more excellent way, inasmuch as it was to abide. I answer: The prophet on the contrary encourages the Jews by telling them that just as the Spirit was with them when they came out of Egypt, God having vouchsafed it to them at that time, the Spirit remained and was abiding still in spite of the captivity; and I quote passages which prove that the Holy Spirit was given at the beginning, and that even after the captivity Nehemiah reminds them of this gift as being one of their special privileges. These were very appropriate quotations to shew that the words of Haggai mean that what had been given when they came out of Egypt was not lost, but still remained with them. That is evidently the sense of the passage, and it shews that the Spirit was also with them at the beginning. This is precisely what it was important to shew. I have perhaps been mistaken in thinking that everyone could lay hold of the force of the passage without an unfolding of it. We must remember that the prophet himself alludes to the time of their coming out of Egypt. “According to the word that I covenanted with you, when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not,” Hag. 2:5. Is it not evident that it is a question of possessing the same privilege as at the beginning without having lost it by the captivity, as the latter might

have given rise to the thought that it was? I quote passages which prove that the presence of the Holy Spirit was one of their privileges when they came out of Egypt.

As to Acts 20, it is clear that it was the elders of Ephesus that the apostle was addressing. He had sent, calling them to come to Miletus, to avoid the loss of time which a visit to the whole church would have occasioned, him (v. 16). Ephesus was a city where the apostle had dwelt for a long time, exercising a most blessed and powerful ministry, so that all Asia (the province) had heard the word, and thus this church had intercourse with all the Christians of the country. He calls the elders to Miletus, and addresses them in the touching discourse that we find in verses 18 to 35. Now it is evident that in sending for them he had on his heart not only those elders, but all the Christians of the place, and even of the whole province. He begins by shewing it. “Ye know,” he says, “from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you.” It is clear enough already that “ye” does not mean the elders only; but it is in the midst of them all, of those of whom the elders were the representatives. See verse 25. The thing will appear still more evident from this passage; “And now, behold, I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.” “Ye all,” does not designate the elders only. “Wherefore, I take you to record this day,” this may apply better to the elders, but as representatives of all. “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” — not to the elders only. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock.” Here the elders are particularly distinguished from the flock, “over the

which," it is stated, the Holy Ghost made them "overseers," to feed the Church of God.215 "For I know that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you." Was he then only thinking of the elders? Clearly not. It was the flock that was in danger; he thought of the sheep which the wolves would seek to devour. Not only some were to come from outside; but from among themselves, from the flock, should "men arise, speaking perverse things." "By the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears" —not only the elders. All this care, during these three years, was not bestowed on the elders only. Neither was it the elders only that he commended to God, such as should receive "an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." We see then that although the "ye" or "you" applies naturally to all the Christians of Ephesus, and even of the whole country, Paul addressed the elders who represented them.216 And thus it always happens in such cases; that is, one addresses oneself to delegates or to representatives, to magistrates, who come forward as if they were the persons they represent, although one may also address to them some special words, just as the apostle points out the elders personally. He distinguishes them nevertheless from the flock, in this last case (v. 28). The expression which speaks of the elders taking "heed," applies evidently to care about others besides themselves.

As to the bondage of Satan, I shall also say a few words. The word "Satan" often frightens persons, but the diligent reader of the Bible will not have failed to perceive that the word of God continually speaks of his influence, and attributes all evil to him, not to cover the

lusts which open the door to him, but to shew the true source of that evil. All those who make a profession of Christianity, and who deny “the power thereof,” are called by the apostle children of the devil. And as to the evil which has been wrought, where the word was sown, it is especially called his work— “an enemy hath done this.” The apostle calls its instruments the apostles of Satan, as the tares are the seed of the wicked one. Now this evil has been principally done by a judaizing doctrine,, and all those who undergo the influence of that doctrine undergo the influence of the enemy. The apostle calls this continually a bondage, as in Galatians 2:4; ch. 4:9; ch. 5:2; so that the idea of bondage, and of bondage under Satan, in reference to Christians deceived by the enemy, is quite a scriptural idea. Moreover, Romans 6:16 fully warrants the use of the expression with respect to all that in which we obey the enemy, and with respect to all error and darkness in which we live, though we are Christians. I do not quote 2 Timothy 2:26, because it can be applied to the unconverted. Let the reader remember that if he obeys Satan, he is in bondage to him. Doubtless this cannot be, in an absolute way, the state of a child of God, but (the flesh being always evil) he will be a slave wherever the flesh is at work, whether in doctrine or in practice. When a whole system, founded on the bases pointed out in the Epistle to the Galatians, rules over children of God, as it often happens (for instance, the papal system), it is, according to the Epistle to the Galatians, a bondage; and in that case, one is certainly the slave of Satan, who rules there.

I now come to the priesthood, centre of unity to Israel, and to the change which took place at the time of the

establishment of royalty. That a remarkable change then took place cannot be questioned. Ichabod had been written upon Israel, and every ordinary relationship with God had been broken, for the ark of the covenant had been taken. Hannah (in the song in which she celebrates, before this disaster, the goodness of God toward herself) had proclaimed that He would give power to His king, and would exalt the horn of His anointed.

The kingly rule is established, but, at first, not such as was according to the will of God, but, in truth, by the great sin of the people, who, in making a king, rejected God who was their King. And from that time the ark was never restored to its place in the tabernacle, but David removed it to the Mount Zion; and having established all the order of the house of God, upon a new footing, he had to leave to his successor (Solomon) the execution of all that which he had received by inspiration, as well as the instalment of the priests in the temple. The order established by David was communicated to him by revelation, just as much as that of the tabernacle had been to Moses. Everything was arranged afresh, although there were elements common to both. It was, then, the epoch of a great change, when grace, acting by means of David, placed the blessing of the people upon a new footing at a time when all had been lost. The prophet comes in between the two states referred to, it is true, as a sort of mediator, in the person of Samuel; but we will leave this for the present. His office was the sovereign means, employed by God, to maintain His relationship with the people, when it was unfaithful and fallen into -decay. That I have rightly estimated this

standing of the kingly authority of David, is proved by the close of Psalm 78 where it is said:—

“When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: so that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men; and delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy’s hand. He gave his people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance. The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage. Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation. Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach. Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; but chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved. And he built his sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which he hath established for ever. He chose David also his servant and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.”

Here we see the sovereign grace and election of God, who raises up David as an instrument to lift up the people, when God had forsaken His tabernacle, and delivered up His people to the sword. This passage is very important, as portraying the true royalty willed by God; but how subject now is the priesthood!

But before giving power to His king, and lifting up the horn of His anointed—of whom the true Anointed was to

be the descendant, and who bore, indeed, prophetically, his name of “Beloved” (David, see Ezekiel)—before the existence of that kingly authority, what was the link between God and the people? What, I say, was the link when there was no king? For some link there must have been. He who is ever so little acquainted with the ways of God in the Old Testament will at once answer, “It was the high priest.” For after Moses (who was king in Jeshurun), who else could be the link? The only person who could have been so was Joshua; but in the very times of Joshua it was the high priest rather who was so. Let us cite the passages which speak of this. Take Numbers 27:15-23. There we see Joshua, who was to command, placed before Eleazar and the congregation; and when a portion of the honour of Moses has been conferred upon him, in order that the people might obey him, he must needs remain before Eleazar the priest who enquired of the Lord by Urim and Thummim. At his word (the word of Eleazar) was to be the coming in, and at his word was to be the going out, of him (Joshua), and of the children of Israel with him, and of all the congregation. Indeed, if God was King in the midst of His people, His high priest, who drew near to Him, was, of necessity, the centre of unity. It was he (the high priest), who bore the names of the twelve tribes upon his breast before the Lord, and their judgment, continually, having the Urim and Thummim, sole true centre of unity. On the other hand, when even it was Joshua who directed them, who communicated to them the will of the Lord, it was, nevertheless, always at the word of Eleazar that they were to come in; and at the word of Eleazar, that they were to go out. That Israel was unfaithful to this, in the times of the judges, is true; but what was the consequence thereof?

God adds a sad history at the end of this book (but it is a history of facts which happened about the commencement of this period, for Phinehas was high priest) in order to give us an idea of the state of things within the country (for almost all the book is occupied with what passed between the people and their enemies); and therein we see that, in their affliction, it was the priesthood which was their resource and common centre; Judges 18:26-28. It is the same in the division of the land, as also in all else (Numbers 14:17; Joshua 14:1), Eleazar is always placed at the head. This had never been the case in the time of Moses. And I ask any attentive reader of the Bible whether such was the place of the high priest in the times of the kings. I am aware it may be replied: “He always bore the breastplate with the names of the tribes.” Be it so, but it is forgotten that God had already abandoned the people upon that footing; that the ark had been delivered up to the Philistines, and that the king chosen of God, inspired by God, saviour to His people through grace, had taken possession of it, and re-settled all upon a new footing, as type and representative of the Anointed of the Lord, of Christ the King of Israel, of the King who should establish the kingdom of God and govern all as such. From that time all hangs upon the conduct of the king. When the kingly office failed, the priesthood could preserve nought. Now the character of Christ in Israel, at that time, will be that of King, and, consequently, it is under that same character that His type and precursor has appeared. Although He be a priest, yet it is as Melchisedek (a priest upon His throne), and not as Aaron, entering into the holy place, that He will act in that day. Aaron is the type of that which He is now; and, therefore, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the very act

of shewing that Christ is personally after the order of Melchisedek, the apostle, as soon as he speaks of His present services, uses the type of Aaron. On the other hand, when the temple is dedicated, the priests cannot abide there by reason of the glory, and it is Solomon—a remarkable type of a kingly priest—who acts. He blesses Israel, and blesses the Lord, as Melchisedek had done when Abraham was returning from the conquest of the kings. David the deliverer, and Solomon established in glory, types of the Lord Jesus, the anointed King in Israel, necessarily take the prominent place, and all hangs on them. For instance, when Solomon sins, ten tribes are rent from his family and from the temple. The fate of the people hangs upon the conduct of the king as leader of the people; 2 Chron. 7:17-20. The history of the kings, from Rehoboam to Zedekiah, shews us that it was thus; and as to the fact, it was the sin of Manasseh brought at length that entire ruin on the people and the house of God; 2 Kings 21:11-14.

The examination of the character of Christ, as Melchisedek, puts the change which took place as to the priesthood in so clear a light, that it is impossible that a Christian instructed in the word should mistake, or say that the sacrificial preeminence of the family of Aaron held the same place in the ways of God subsequent to the establishment of royalty, as it did before. Moreover, we have seen, in detail, proofs to the contrary. In like manner, Solomon sends back Abiathar to his own house, and when David, without troubling himself about the priesthood, places the ark in Zion—an all-important change, he places the priests in Gibeon before the altar; and there were none before the ark (see 1 Chron. 16:37, to the end of the chapter). We find also (2 Sam. 6:17, 18)

this character of Melchisedek shewing itself in measure in David. If we closely examine the change, we shall see how vast was its import. The expression (1 Sam. 2:35), “he shall stand, (or shall walk) before his anointed,” has already revealed this. The ark taken captive, where is the glory? Ichabod being the state of Israel in such sort that the priesthood was a nullity as to its original exercise (for without the ark there was no day of atonement for Israel), God interposes in an extraordinary manner by means of prophecy, which was a sovereign means on His part, and announces to the afflicted and downcast people, in the person and by the mouth of Hannah, that there was a new means of blessing; that He “the Lord maketh poor and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed,” 1 Sam. 2:7-10.

Here, in the presence of the priesthood, and on the eve of the capture of the ark, a new character, that of “the anointed,” is introduced. The anointing had before been distinctively attached to the priesthood. The high priest had been the anointed. Now it is another who is distinctively “the anointed,” it is the king; and this connects itself with the character in which the Christ

was to appear. The king being thus distinctively the anointed, the high priest, who had been so previously, walks before Him. He (the priest) is still in office, but he is no longer the centre of the system. The king, type of Christ, has taken his place.

Let us examine this in another point of view. It is certain that God, in His determinate counsel, designed to glorify His Son, even in the kingly power as regards Israel and the world. But on the other hand, the people ought to have remained before God by the means of the high priest, without a king being needed for the maintenance of its order. The Lord was their King. Consequently God permitted the sin of the people to ripen, ere He established His anointed. Now the priesthood, as we have seen, and as all the Levitical system testifies, was the centre of all the relationships of the people with God —the link of the chain which was near the throne of the Lord. The Lord was Himself King in Israel; but Israel needed to see a king, to be like the other nations. The notion that the sift was simply in desiring a king like the other nations, and that the thing was not evil because it was foreknown of God, cannot be admitted for a moment: “And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them,” 1Sam. 8:7.

At the same time, God presents before the people what will be the consequences; but the people say, “Nay, but a king shall reign over us”: “Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations,” 1 Sam. 8:5; compare with chap. 12:12.

Now, already, before this request, the high priest had, if one may so say, disappeared. Samuel offered sacrifices here and there; but at length God established His king, His anointed, as we have seen, and in such a position (for he was the type of Christ), that it is said by the Holy Spirit, “Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king,” 1 Chron. 29:23.

We see here the anointed of the Lord seated upon the throne of the Lord. The high priest walks before him. This it is which will take place when the kingdom shall be established. Without the least doubt Christ will be the head and centre of it. The question here is not of the high priest, type of the heavenly priesthood (a thought which properly applies only to the tabernacle, as we see in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the apostle speaks only of the tabernacle), but of the position of the high priest in the presence of the king. Christ must have that place of king. David and Solomon are the types of this—in suffering, in victory, and in glory—sitting upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel; 1 Chron. 28:5. Now, previously, the Lord Himself had been their King, and the high priest abode before Him. The people rejected God that He should not reign over them. Their iniquity gave occasion for the accomplishment of His designs in grace, even as it befalls us. But before this act of the people, the high priesthood itself had failed, and all the order to which it pertains was dissolved. The ark was taken, and consequently the relations of God with the people broken, so far as that depended upon their faithfulness. That order, such as it had been, was not restored. The tabernacle never received the ark. The king became the anointed; and he it is who arranges as to the ark, and the high priest must walk before him.

Now, to say, in the face of changes of such a kind as this, that external splendour placed the high priest in a more glorious position, deserves no reply. It was worth while developing these things by reason of their intrinsic value.

These remarks will already have enabled us to understand what was the royal authority truly willed of God, and what was the royal authority which was chosen by man: but we will cite some passages to make it perfectly obvious.

First, I do not see exactly that royalty was in failure during the reign of Saul. The king fell by the hands of the Philistines, but Saul was no more an unbeliever at the close than at the commencement. Sin came to its maturity in him; his heart hardened itself: alas! this is the history of man. But Saul never stood by faith; and the royal authority was not in worse plight at the close than at the commencement. He was disobedient, and God withdrew His favour from him as an individual; but I see not in what the royal authority, as such, failed. It is true, indeed, that the judgment which we have to form upon this, in measure, depends upon the principal question, viz., that of the character of the royal authority of Saul, and to what point we can call it the royal authority willed of God. This we will now examine.

Samuel sees so distinctively the will of the people in this matter, that he says (in substance in the terms of which I have made use), “Now, therefore, behold the king whom ye have chosen,” 1 Sam. 12:13. This royal authority, was it that which was willed of God? The Spirit of God by Moses had anticipated the occasion in which the people of God would ask for a king, and had given rules to be

observed when the occasion occurred; but the will of God is not found there; Deut. 17:14-29, etc.

It is clear that nothing can happen without the will of God. But it is certain that the establishment of Saul was not, morally, according to the divine will. Several passages in the book of Samuel furnish unanswerable proofs of this. “The thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. Now therefore hearken unto their voice; howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them,” 1 Sam. 8:6, 7, 9.

Then Samuel recounts the oppressions which they must needs endure at the hand of the king, and adds, “And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day,” 1 Sam. 8:18. But “ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the Lord your God was your king,” I Sam. 12:12.

We see here passages which shew, with the most entire evidence (unless the Lord willed that the people should reject Himself; unless, which is impossible, He willed a great sin, see 1 Sam. 12:17, 19), that it is not possible that God willed the royalty of Saul. There is a collateral proof that this was not the royalty willed of God, viz., in that the entire responsibility of maintaining its relationship with God is left to the people. (See end of chap. 12.) But the people having shewn that they could not do without that intermediate power— could not walk with God in direct relationship, and God having also

manifested the evil, the door opens for the accomplishment of His counsels in Christ: for there was a royalty which had its place in the counsels of God—even that of Christ—whose forerunner and type the Lord Himself raises up, without the will or thought of the people finding any entrance whatsoever. We have already seen the manner in which God (in Psalm 78) passes from His judgment upon Shiloh, by the way He had abandoned the tabernacle for ever, to His own choice, viz., to David and to the place of His throne in the midst of His people —the place chosen for His abode. Compare Psalm 132:17, where it is written, "There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed."

Such was the royalty willed of God. "The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people," 1 Sam. 13:14. And again, "Fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, for I have provided me a king among his sons," chap. 16:1. Having anointed him, it is David who is the true chief and leader of Israel, even during the reign of Saul. The Lord also said to him, speaking of Solomon, "I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee," 1 Chron. 17:13. And in Psalm 89, where the bounties of God concentrate upon David, type of the true Well-beloved:—

"Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him: with whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him."

And in 2 Samuel 7 (of which we have cited one verse) we find all the blessing of the people connected with the house of David. Moreover, his relation with Christ considered, this could not be otherwise. I would quote Hosea 13:11, but its application to Saul may be questioned. I have quoted passages in direct proof that the existence of the royal authority of Saul was by an act of sin; and that it was not what God willed to maintain as that which He had established according to His will; and that the royal authority of David was established by the very act and by the will of God during the very existence of the other. But, in fact, the manner in which the word expresses itself, as to the relationship between the royalty of David and that of Christ, the allusions of the prophets to Christ under this very name, the manner in which the Psalms speak, the history of David, its analogy with that of Christ, the bearing of all that is said, and the very history, all these things are (for him who takes notice of the ways of God) what manifest the divine thought as to His counsels in Christ; and they are evidence far more powerful than isolated texts in proof that the royalty of David was that willed by God, and that the royal authority of Saul (fruit of the will of the people, who in desiring him rejected God) was not so; although, in a certain sense, all things are according to His sovereign will. It is, consequently, in the royalty of David that the failure of this means of relationship with God is in question, and not in that which took place with the sin of the people, who, in establishing it, rejected God. When we speak of failure, we take for granted there was a state in which God had established man (or, indeed, angels) in blessing; but in blessing lost through the failure, so far as the responsibility of him who was placed in it goes, the sovereign grace of God alone

remaining, and capable of reestablishing it according to His counsels of peace. And this proves, in an unquestionable manner, that God never reestablishes, in its primitive state, a thing entrusted to men and placed under responsibility; because, as to that which regards man, all these things are but figures of some part of the glory of Christ, who alone can uphold them. Thus Adam himself was the pattern of Him that was to come; and the blessings of an earthly paradise must needs be replaced in Christ by far better mercies, but could not be so out of Him. So the priesthood, the royal authority, and every other form of blessing whatsoever, can only be realized in Christ. Nevertheless, God places man in positions which correspond to all these blessings, and man has always failed therein. The patience of God has been great (so it is expressed as to the royal authority), "till there was no remedy," 2 Chron. 36:16. Then man is judged in the failed thing, and it is in Christ alone that the thing is established—in Him who alone maintains, and is able to maintain, all the glory of God and the blessing of man in these things. "And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons," Isa. 22:24.

As to the question of "Lo-ammi" —I cannot complain that people do not receive the application without examination. There is nothing in my thoughts as to the Church which refers to this particularly.

The rejection of Judah, at the time of the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and, consequently, the cessation of the application of the title "Ammi" to the whole people, has been the universal conviction of those

Christians who have studied these subjects; and this for very simple reasons. One may be astonished that any one should call it in question, but I will briefly here present some of the proofs. To give them in full and-in order, it would be needful to transcribe the greater part of the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Before producing some of these, it is well to recall the fact, that Israel is always the people of God; and if the affections of the heart and of the faith of a Daniel and a Nehemiah have called them so, nothing is proved thereby. Israel cannot cease to be the people of God. “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance,” and it is of Israel that this is said. God never ceases to consider Israel as His people; but He has ceased to govern them as His people, and to have His throne in the midst of them upon the earth. Paul insists in Romans 11 upon this point after their rejection of Christ— “I say, then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid” (v. 1).

So that Israel may now be called the people of God, and ought to be so, as beloved for the fathers’ sakes, respect being had to the election. Hence this is not the question. If Zacharias (Luke 1) says He has visited and redeemed His people, this is still less difficult to understand, because he speaks of the coming of Jesus, who was, in truth, to establish the people in the enjoyment of all its privileges as the people of God. This, then, proves nothing; for, if this proves that “Lo-ammi” was not applicable, because Israel remain the people of God, it is evident that they never will be “Lo-ammi,” because they are always the people of God.

It might be said, perhaps, “But this is because Judah always remained the people of God.” One could hardly venture to say so after the death of Jesus. But the fact is,

that the apostle takes no notice of the distinction between Judah and the ten tribes. He speaks of all Israel, and shews that they are beloved for the fathers' sakes—that God has not cast off the people whom He had foreknown. Now this, evidently, does not apply only to Judah, but to all Israel, as the apostle expresses himself; and the distinction which he draws is between all Israel and the election according to grace. This will suffice for the moment; we shall see positive proofs of it farther on. Here I seek only to shew that the recognition of the people, as a people, applies to all Israel, and that it is entirely to misapprehend the force of the passages, and to mistake as to the whole question, to suppose that the faithfulness of God to His predeterminate counsel, and the precious faith of them that are His in that unchangeable faithfulness, according to which the title of His people is given to Israel, touches the question of the judgment of "Lo-ammi." It is to confound the counsels of God with His government. In all times, Israel is His people, according to His counsels, and the thoughts of His love. This does not prevent their being called "Lo-ammi" (not my people) as to the government of God. Consequently, the fact that Israel has been called "His people" at any given epoch leaves the question entirely unanswered of "When was the sentence of 'Lo-ammi' pronounced?" Only we have made a step in our research after truth, to wit, in that we have found that this concerns the government of God. For "Lo-ammi" certainly applies, as to the government of God, to all Israel, and to the ten tribes, at one epoch or another. And as to the sovereign love and the counsels of God, Israel as a whole are always His people. The question then is of His government, and we can now ask, "When is it that God, in His government of the people of

Israel, executes upon that people the sentence of 'Lo-ammi'?" I am about to shew my reader that it was at the time of the captivity of Babylon.

It is certain that the ten tribes bore the name of Israel after their separation from the other two, and that they are presented in general as having the right to the title, the other two being rather an appendage to the family of David whom God would not utterly forsake. Yet the fate of the whole people hung upon that family, on account of the Messiah, who was to be of it, and of the temple, which was at Jerusalem. The perusal of the Book of Kings will shew that the ten tribes held the place I refer to; the Book of Chronicles shews the importance of the family of David. The last chapter of 2 Chronicles shews us that the God of Israel was thoughtful of His house and of His people, until there was no remedy. Lastly, 2 Kings 23 shews us that the sin of Manasseh was the cause of the Lord's saying, "I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem, which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there."

As Jeremiah had said— "Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight and let them go forth. And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell diem, Thus saith the Lord; Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity. And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the Lord: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and

destroy. And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem. For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest? Thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting."

Compare 2 Kings 21:13; Jeremiah 14:7. Thus we learn that in the captivity of Babylon (for that event is the subject of these passages) the Lord rejected Judah as He had rejected Israel. He drove that people from before His face and destroyed Jerusalem, being weary of repenting.

Now, Hosea handles the case of Israel and of Judah, and his prophecy bears date of the reign of the various kings of both countries who reigned in his time. The ten tribes are principally the objects, inasmuch as they formed the main body of the people, and as their dispersion was nearer at hand; but the judgment of Judah is also proclaimed, and the prophet, at times, speaks of the whole together under the titles of "the children of Israel," and "my people": especially in chapter 4, as being the priesthood of God, while at the same time he speaks of the priests separately. The general application here of the expression "children of Israel" is explained clearly by its use in chapter 3:5. The judgment on Judah is announced in chapter 5:5, and 10-15; chap. 6:4-11; that of the house of the Lord, chapter 8:1; that of Judah, again, verse 14; of Ephraim, Judah, and all Jacob, chap. 10:11; of Judah and Jacob, chap. 12:2. The sum of these passages shews plainly enough the object of the

prophecy of Hosea; it applies to the whole of the land and of the people, to Judah as well as to Israel; but the ten tribes are chiefly in view. The expression, the mother, includes both, and the restoration of the whole people is announced, chapter 2, when God will again become their husband. The point which is not treated by Hosea is the family of David, if not in chapter 3:4, 5, in which the subject is the people as a whole, under the title of “children of Israel,” and their history in a few striking words up to the time of their millennial restoration.

The expression “Lo-ammi” necessarily applies to all the people, and, consequently, could not be announced ere the captivity of Babylon, although great progress may have been made towards its fulfilment by the captivity of the ten tribes. The conduct of the king had, from the days of David and Solomon, been the question with God, in His dealings with His people, who were finally rejected on account of the sin of Manasseh. The impiety of Solomon had already been the cause of the separation of ten tribes from the throne of his family, and then the peculiar iniquity of these ten tribes had finally caused them to be delivered over into the hands of the Gentiles. Still, the house of God, the family of David, the priesthood of Aaron, the ark of the covenant, continued surrounded by two tribes and some other Israelites, in such sort that one could not say absolutely that there is no longer a people. Yet the arm of the Lord was already lifted up to smite Judah. One has only to consult Isaiah (who prophesied at the same time as Hosea), the declarations of the first four chapters, and the magnificent and touching appeal of chapter 5 of his

prophecy, to.see what was the judgment which God had formed upon the state of Judah.

In the midst of these circumstances, Hosea announces, first of all, the judgment of the house of Jehu. Then, under the (symbolical) name of “Lo-ruhamah,” he announces that the Lord will entirely remove the house of Israel, that is to say, the ten tribes. But He will yet have mercy upon Judah, and will deliver it, even as He did in the case of Sennacherib, successor of him who led captive Israel. Then He declares by another (symbolical) name given to another child, that at length He will pronounce the sentence of “Lo-ammi”; for, said He, you are not My people. Having announced this judgment in an absolute manner, by a prophetic act, after the judgment executed upon Israel, by means of which it was already entirely cut off, and having declared at the time of this cutting off that Judah should be spared, the evidence is of the clearest kind, that it would be by the judgment executed upon Judah that this sentence would take effect. This is by so much the more evident in that “Lo-ammi,” by the import of the term, applies to the whole people, which was the object of the prophecy of Hosea. Immediately afterwards, the prophet, publishing the mercies of God, declares, first, that the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea-shore, and that then the children of Israel—here expressly distinguished the one from the other in order to establish their re-union in one—shall be gathered together, and shall appoint to themselves a leader, etc. We thus see clearly that the answer and the dehverance embrace Judah as well as Israel, both of whom were included in “Lo-ammi,” although the judgment pronounced for the latter could not take effect until

Judah also should be rejected, and thus there should no longer be a people before God. That God in the meanwhile preserved a little remnant, which He brought back in order to present Christ to it, is evident. The question which we have to solve is this— Did God, as to His government, put in force this sentence of “Lo-ammi” at the time of the captivity of Babylon? for that sentence must needs at some time be put in force.

Now let us bear in mind, that the question, as to this expression, is one of the relationship of God with His people, already broken as to the ten tribes (whatsoever may have been the patience of God, and the messages which He sent to them) by the separation of Jeroboam. For the golden calves did not maintain the relationship of Israel with God. Now, Jerusalem was the place which He had chosen, the temple the place where He had placed His name. The ark of the covenant of the God of the whole earth was there. The family of David, a family chosen for the maintenance of His relationship with His people, the Urim and the Thummim, means of receiving (by the intervention of the priesthood) light and direction from God, were there. Now, not only had Judah sinned, but the family of David, upon the conduct of which all depended, had failed in fidelity. There was no remedy (2 Chron. 36:16), and God must reject Judah as He had rejected Israel.

But in this case the act is more solemn, because the house of God, the throne of God (dwelling) between the cherubim, the royal authority, which was of God, which “sat on the throne of the Lord” (1 Chron. 29:23), His Urim and His Thunimim, were in question. But how preserve them there in order to sanction the iniquity which existed? That would have been still worse, and

God executes the judgment which He had pronounced upon His people. The house of God is destroyed, the family of David is led into captivity, and the times of the Gentiles commence. The sceptre of the world is placed in the hands of the Gentiles by the authority of the God of the heavens, an event of immense import, which exists even at this time, and which necessarily prevents the establishment of the earthly people of God, considered in the light of the government of God, because the reign of the Messiah cannot consist with such empire in the hands of the Gentiles. Now it is as clear as possible that the epoch of the restoration and blessing of Israel, when they will no longer be "Lo-ammi," will be that of the reign of the Messiah. For the time being the people of God is a heavenly people, subject to the powers which be, a people which has nothing to seek in the world but the glory of Him who has saved it in order to introduce it into the heavens.

We see then, at the taking of Jerusalem, the judgment of God executed upon His people; the ark of the covenant taken; the house of God burnt; its royal authority taken from the family of David (and this until the coming of the true son of David); the Urim and the Thummim of the priesthood lost; the throne of God removed from off the earth; and sovereign authority placed in the hands of the Gentiles. In a word, all that which, as institutions, formed the link between God and the people is set aside (observe it, reader), and by a means which renders the re-establishment of the people impossible, because the sceptre and authority have been transferred by God to the hands of the Gentiles.

Under the old covenant, all was lost; under the new, under the Messiah, all is yet future for Israel. Christ

manifested in flesh has not re-established the old covenant, and Israel have not been placed under the new. Christ was personally perfect under the old, and when He shed His blood—basis of the new covenant, the time was past for Israel as a nation. If the grace of God proposed to this people the return of Jesus (Acts 3) if they repented, the people in their blindness stopped the mouths of those who made the declaration. This truth, that it is under the new covenant and under the Messiah that Israel will be recognized as a people, is of all importance in order to judge in these matters. We shall see that the prophets who announce the judgment by Nebuchadnezzar pass directly from it to the coming of Christ. We shall see that, although God acted to bring matters to this point by divers acts of providence, Christ, when the blessing is established, is always in relationship with the people as a whole, and that the existence of two tribes without the ten cannot accord with the accomplishment of the promises in Christ. He may come from heaven to destroy the wicked one; but once united to Israel, it is to all Israel: so that there should have been the re-establishment in the promised blessing at the time of the return from Babylon is impossible, if in that view that event is considered as a continuation of Judah alone as the people of God.

We will now examine the passages which prove that which has just been stated. That the royal authority over all the earth was conferred on Nebuchadnezzar is most clearly stated in Daniel 2:37, 38; and even that this should continue until the setting up of the kingdom of God (v. 38-44); which renders it impossible that Judah during that interval should be the people of God, recognized by Him, His government being that which we

have to consider. Israel is always “Lo-ammi” during this period.

I need not say that the royal authority was not renewed in the family of David. We nowhere find that the ark of the covenant was made de novo; certainly it was not so by the command of God; and, surely they could not make the tables of the law having the writing of God, which rendered the ark the ark of the testimony. We have, further, the assurance that no manifestation of the glory of God, sign of His presence, took place at the time of the dedication of the second temple, as happened when the tabernacle was set up, and when the ark was introduced into the temple of Solomon, and they sounded with the trumpets. So that the testimony and the glory of the presence of God were wanting to the ark, if so be they made one. The absence of these two things made the existence of an ark the plain proof that all that which could have given importance to it was wanting. That there was neither Urim nor Thummim is a fact also admitted by the Jews, and proved by Nehemiah 7:65.

The absence of this mysterious token was a fact of the most serious kind, for it was thus that the high priest bore the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually. That is to say, all that which symbolized the presence of God, and all the links established of old and which maintained the relation of the people with God, were wanting, while the people themselves were subjected to the Gentiles by reason of their sin. God might come in in grace; He might send messengers to the little off-shoot of His people which found itself at Jerusalem; He might bear with the mutilated state of institutions, the exterior appearance

of which was re-established; He might, further, send His Son: all this He did; but He never cancelled the decree of “Lo-ammi.” He could not do so, save by Jesus and the new covenant, when the links of the first covenant were broken, and Israel subjected to the Gentiles. He presented Jesus—the people would not have Him. He presented Him in the faithfulness of His promise; and it is evident that it was not according to the old covenant, under which Israel had been in relationship with God as a people: all was lost according to that covenant. The new covenant could not be established with a people who rejected its Mediator in Jesus.

There remain three things for us to consider. That which the prophets said after the captivity, and that which they said before, as to the means which God would employ in order that Israel might be His people, and, then, the manner in which the New Testament presents this point. I put in the forefront the prophets after the captivity, because we find there all that the Spirit of God could say of the strongest kind to encourage the people on their return. If in examining these passages we find that the remnant which returned from the captivity is not in them called the people of God, we shall also understand that the other prophets and the New Testament confirm this testimony.

Let us examine Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Never once is the people returned from the captivity called by any one of these prophets the people of God: contrariwise, in the occasions in which one would have supposed this inevitable, the expression is not found, but they say, that they will be His people in the last days. But in these occasions it is Israel and Judah: proof manifest that they were not recognized by God then as

His people. Never do these prophets say on behalf of God “My people.” Their prophecies are full of remarkable revelations on the subject of times yet to come, as also with regard to the first coming of Jesus; and they connect the blessings which are to come with the encouragements which they give for the time present; but never at the time, nor in reference to the first coming of Jesus, are the people called the people of God. While Zechariah is very plain in declaring that it will be so in the latter days, never is it said that God should dwell in the temple then, but He promises to abide there in the days yet to come. But it is after the glory that the prophet is sent to the nations who have robbed Israel; then it is said, “I will dwell in the midst of thee.” (Compare Zech. 2:8-10.)

It is said, “lam returned to Jerusalem with mercies; my house shall be built in it” (Zech. 1:16); but the promise of abiding there is reserved for another time, when the four carpenters shall have “frayed away,” and “cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it” (v. 21).

Again, in chapter 8 it is said, “I will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem” (v. 3); but, forthwith, we find the times yet to come in which God will cause His people to come from the east and from the west, and when He will be their God. For the time present, he says, “so again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah: fear ye not” (v. 15).

Precious encouragement! yet leaving the abiding of God and the title of “His people,” as a hope for days to come, when (chap. 6:12), “behold the man whose name is the Branch shall grow up out of his place”; and (chap. 9:13)

Ephraim and Judah shall be united as the bow and the arrow of the Lord.

The promises in Haggai are temporal, and the presence of the messenger of the covenant is promised for the house, but for a time yet to come, for it is when God shall have shaken all nations, the heavens and the earth —a declaration which Hebrews 12:26 makes us understand is not yet accomplished. The attentive reader of the Bible will not have failed to observe that God constantly addresses Himself to Judah, or to the whole nation as to His people, by the prophets who spake to them before the captivity. Stronger proof one can scarcely have, that God no longer recognized Judah as His people after the captivity of Babylon, while, at the same time, He was vouchsafing to them the promise that, together with Israel, they should be His people, when He should re-establish them by means of Christ under the new covenant. I will now examine what is the light which the prophets who announced the judgment executed upon Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar furnish, and what is the epoch at which they declare that Israel will anew be called the people of God. They are the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. We have already seen that the Lord, weary of repenting, would reject Judah as He had rejected Israel, and that He would execute, without longer deferring (Ezek. 19:21-28), the judgment announced. We shall, then, now see at what epoch the prophets place the re-establishment of Judah in the enjoyment of the privilege of being the people of God.

Before clearing up this point, and examining at what moment the name of “my people “is given to Israel (I say to Israel because the two families are always united in this blessing), I will draw the attention of my reader to

the solemn judgment which took place at the time of the taking of Jerusalem, which stamps its true character upon this, and gives the true force of the term “Lo-ammi,” placed on the forehead of Judah, as well as of the whole nation, when it was led captive to Babylon, and on the import of the transfer of the throne to the midst of the Gentiles. The throne of God shews itself, and the cherubim of glory, with the wheels, the rings of which were so high that they were dreadful to the spirit of the prophet— these wheels which were as a wheel within a wheel; the cherubim running to and fro, according to the appearance of lightning, and the wheels in the rings were full of eyes round about. There was the likeness of a man sitting upon a throne. This was the vision of the glory of the Lord. Then he declares to the prophet the end: “An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land. Now is the end come upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations. And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will recompense thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and ye shall know that I am the Lord,” Ezek. 7:2-4.

Then, having set a mark upon those that sighed and cried by reason of all these abominations, He visits and smites the wicked according to the glory of His throne, beginning at His house. But a judgment yet more solemn, announced by the most significant action, awaited the rebellious city. The throne of glory, the cherubim which the prophet had seen at Chebar appeared anew at the side of the house of the Lord, whither the prophet had been carried. “Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and stood over the

threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory," Ezek. 10:4.

Wherefore this solemn visit of the Lord to His house full of imagery and corruption? Wherefore this unwonted glory? Alas! the reason was but too soon evident. Then the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the house and mounted up above the cherubim. The temple is void; the glory has departed from it! In vain the cherubim of gold stretched forth their wings over a forsaken mercy-seat, and over a broken law— He who, till within a while filled that throne of glory, had quitted it. Nebuchadnezzar might take possession of the temple as of a corpse. The God of heaven had entrusted him with a kingdom. The glory of the Lord had forsaken His throne upon the earth. "Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city," Ezek. 11:22, 23.

The Lord had quitted Jerusalem; the throne on earth was given to the Gentiles. Has the Lord returned to Jerusalem to hold His throne in subjection to that of a Persian or a Greek? We have seen that, whatever may have been His compassion for His people, His presence has not returned to fill with His glory the new building. If God is not there, what meaning in the title— "The people of God"? And when is it that this poor but ever loved people will find again their blessedness? When will" Lo-ammi "be for ever effaced from their forehead, to make way for that precious title "Ammi"? God had already accomplished His word: "And I will stretch over

Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab; and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down. And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies," 2 Kings 21:13,14. As it is said in Jeremiah 12:7, "I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies." Already, at the moment of quitting Jerusalem, as He did before driving our first parents from Eden, He announced the deliverance and the blessing: "I will even gather you from the people and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel," Ezek. 11:17.

But one sees at once that it is not of the return from Babylon that the prophet speaks, for it is added, "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh" (v.-19).

Now, we know with the most perfect certainty, that this did not take place at the return from Babylon, nor, certainly, since the first coming of Jesus. The prophet passes to the latest days, in order that the people may be blessed. Let us again turn to Jeremiah, who announced and saw the taking of Jerusalem, of which we speak. He declares in chapter 30 that God will bring back the captives of Israel and of Judah, and that they shall possess the land given to their fathers. David their king shall be raised up, "and their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them" (v. 21); and, adds the Lord, "Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God" (v. 22). In chapter

31:31 we have the new covenant. There is also the question of Israel and Judah in verse 27.

In chapter 32 Judah is again restored by an everlasting covenant; they shall no more draw back from God, they shall be His people, and the Lord will be their God. (See verses 38-40.) Again, in chapter 33:7, God will bring back again Israel and Judah. “In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David” (v. 15).

In Ezekiel 34 David shall be prince (v. 24). “They shall be my people, saith the Lord God” (v. 30). In chapter 36 we have the remarkable promise to which above all others the Lord Jesus made allusion in His conversation with Nicodemus, and which declares the necessity of that work in order that Israel may enjoy their privileges even in the land, and that they may be at the same time “Ammi,” the people of God, and that God may be their God. We have also here the proof that this work (which shews that the people were not recognized as the people of God), is applicable to the people, such as they were at the return from Babylon, since the Lord so applies it, and that the promise of being the people of God cannot be fulfilled without this work of grace being made good; a work which was not made good in the days of the Lord, and which is not yet either, as to the restoration of the nation. In chapter 37 we see Judah and Israel reunited in a striking manner—the people of God “Ammi,” and God their God—twice repeated and David king over them. They shall walk in the judgments and statutes of fiie Lord, David being their prince, in their own land for ever. Upon these points chapters 38 and 39 may also be consulted. These passages shew, in a way not to be disputed, that the epoch at which Israel should

become “Ammi” (that is to say, should no longer be “Lo-ammi,” for “Lo” is but a negation), was not to be realized until the last days, when Christ will be their king; that this was to have its accomplishment by that grace which will write the law in their hearts, when God gives them a new heart according to the new covenant, and all Israel will be there. Judah and the ten tribes will form but one nation which will never be divided nor driven from the land, over which Christ will reign for ever. And all this is said on the occasion of the captivity of Babylon, in which God rejected Judah as He had rejected Israel; as also that the promise of the return from the captivity which would cause “Ammi” to be named upon Israel should be when all these things therein recited should be accomplished; so that the period during which “Lo-ammi” is the name of Israel was to last from the captivity of Babylon until the return of the Lord.

Lastly, to remove all possibility of question, I add that the judgment of “Lo-ammi” was not executed before the captivity of Judah, for in Jeremiah 2 God still calls them His people. And to shew that this was not because the term “Lo-ammi” could not apply but to Israel, I quote verse 4, “Hear ye the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel.” On the other hand, the New Testament shews us, that then also all Israel was thought of, and that God considered it as not His people, making an allusion to Hosea. We have seen the Lord shewing that the kingdom of God, under which the people would be the people of God, could not come but by the fulfilment of the promises of the new covenant. And the Apostle Paul says (Acts 26), “Unto which [promise] our twelve tribes instantly serving God

day and night”; so also James, “To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.”

We have already seen that (Rom. 11) Paul only distinguishes Between the election and Israel; the latter, in the last days, when a deliverer should come out of Zion. And the distinction was so lost at that time, that (in Acts 26) the expression of the twelve tribes is a neuter in the singular (to dodekaphulon). So, in citing the passage which speaks of “Lo-ammi,” Paul applies it to the state of the Jews, before being called by the revelation of Jesus as Saviour, without distinguishing “Lo-ruhamah” and “Lo-ammi.” Peter is still more positive in his manner of expressing himself, and tells us in just so many words, that the term “Lo-ammi” applies to the state of the people before the revelation of Christ, while those who received Him quitted that position. I say “people,” for it is without controversy that the expression “strangers scattered abroad” (parepidemois diasporas) belongs to Israel, while at the same time it restricts itself to such among them as believed. So that we have a direct revelation that the state of the people, after Babylon, was the state of “Lo-ammi.” See 1 Peter 2:10.

I believed it might be useful to present this point clearly for brethren who are interested in it. It treats not of the question of the Church, save so far as all truths are linked together; but it treats of an epoch, singularly important, as to the government of God, because God ceased to dwell upon the throne of the earth between the cherubim, and entrusted sovereign power to a chief raised up among the Gentiles—a state of things which is to continue under one form or other until the judgment of the world.

The question of particular communications remains—an important subject, and which well deserves to be clearly explained.

I have spoken with precision enough on the two elements of the truth in power in man, namely, the Spirit of God and the word, to be well understood as to what my convictions are on the subject. See “A Glance at various Ecclesiastical Principles,” at the beginning of this volume. I have only to say that the pretension to follow the Spirit without the Bible may lead us to take for the truth all kinds of imaginations; and if one takes the Bible without the Spirit, it is making the spirit of man to be equal with God, and even His judge. But the importance of the subject is such, that we shall say a few words on it. I believe in an immediate action on the soul. When I spoke of particular communications, the expression is explained and guarded by what is added, viz., that there are no new truths which are not in the Bible. I gave as instances Luther and Calvin, to shew clearly what I meant. Suppose that any one understands the truth as Luther and Calvin understood it; that he had even learnt other truths also, which they had not laid hold of (such as the coming of the Lord, the restoration of the Jews, and other truths), does it follow that he will have the energy of Calvin or Luther? Was that energy merely natural? Had not the Spirit of God anything to do with it? When God raises up extraordinary men, is there nothing else in them but the understanding of the Bible and the natural character? For my part, I do not think so. I believe in the action of the living God. I do not believe that the sole work of the Spirit is to make me understand the word. Are there any other truths then which might not be in the Bible? Certainly not, as I have

already said. But the Holy Ghost worked in those men in a way in which He did not work in others who have discerned the same truths. He made them apprehend in a most special manner the force and bearing of certain truths by communications particular to their heart and mind. He made them understand the application of certain parts of the word to certain things that existed in the world. He rendered them capable of judging these things by the word, and gave them to apply that word to those things with a clearness and a force which others did not partake of. He placed before them the true state of Christendom in the light of the word, as He did not for others, producing thus an effect which was much more than a mere discerning of the sense of the passages. It may be that the flesh came and had its influence. They were not guarded as instruments of a new revelation, because there was already a perfect one; but I believe there was an immediate and special action of the Holy Ghost, who brought them to think on certain truths, who made the application of these to their souls, who gave them a sound and true judgment on certain things by means of the word, and gave to certain acts a greater importance in their eyes by the consequences and scope He shewed them to be there, and which others, not being in the same way under His teaching, would never have seen there. They were to convince others by the word that those things were not according to the truth, but the perception they had of their bearing had been given to them by the Holy Ghost, and that on account of the work they were doing. The evidence of all was in the word; but the Spirit of God acted directly in the mind of him whom He was employing to produce certain convictions, and to employ certain portions of the word according to the times and

according to the work He was doing. In a word, there were particular communications, although there were no fresh truths which did not exist in the written word.

Such is my conviction, and my adversaries may rest assured that there must be other evidence than what has been said as yet to lead me to give up my conviction. Do they really attribute the energy and work of a Luther, a Calvin, and a Zwingle, merely to a clear discernment of the sense of the word and to their natural character? If it be so, I am not of their way of thinking. I believe in a positive action of the Spirit of my God. If they believe not in it, I have no wish to share their convictions. If they tell me, But it was a particular gift vouchsafed to these. This is treated in the passage of the tract on Ministry, where particular communications are spoken of. I believe in the energy and action of the Spirit of God, and I believe in the absolute authority of the word, sole and all-sufficient to rule and judge of everything. If they doubt with regard to one and to the other it is for them to answer for their unbelief.

I shall be told, But there will be abuses. I believe there will, but abuses which we shall always be able to judge by the word, if we maintain His authority, and if we use it by the Spirit. There will be fanatical abuses, even where at bottom there is sincerity, anyone may see it without having any piety. Even with true Christians there are rationalistic abuses, which undermine the happiness of the Church, and deprive it of energy and life. It is difficult to reconcile the energy of the Spirit and the soberness of spirituality according to the word. This is only to be found, as indeed every blessing, near to God. “Whether we be beside ourselves,” says the

apostle, “it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.”

But I will go farther, and take the case of ordinary Christians. Does not the Holy Ghost act upon the affections? Does He not reveal Christ immediately to the heart? Does He not lay duties upon the heart in a pressing way? Does He not produce thoughts in the soul? When Christ says, “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him”; is this only effected by causing one to discern the sense of the word? When the apostle says, “Be filled with the Spirit,” does this only mean, Understand well the word? When he speaks of a Spirit of power, is it only understanding the word? For my part, I do not think so. I believe that power is something different from the knowledge of the word, although such knowledge is the light according to which this power acts; and I earnestly desire that those who make these objections may understand that I find their ideas false, and having their source in unbelief, in an unbelief most hurtful to the Church; and I can hardly conceive how one can deny or set aside the action of the Holy Ghost in power, unless it be because one has not had the experience of it. For my part, I feel enough that it fails me in many respects to acknowledge its reality, and feel the need of seeking it more and more, while deploring my want of faith.

209 Geneva, 1850.

210 One must not suppose that all the passages in italics, in the tract entitled “The Seven Proceedings,” and given as the expression of the views it condemns,

are quotations from what was really said. There are some on elders, which are so; but several are merely the form which is attributed to the views one wishes to refute. This is so true that “The Seven Proceedings” reproduces a passage textually taken from the pamphlet of the same author “Are Elders to be established?” as being the assertion of Mr. Foulquier.

211 “Scriptural Views,” p. 26.

212 Here is the thing better expressed than I could do it myself: “There is something which is more compromised among us than the truth; it is its value and its claims. We are less far from finding the same dogmas in the scriptures, than from giving them the same authority over us; and we may be allowed to affirm that the questions on which Christians are divided would soon be settled, if they drew near to the Bible with the intention of taking seriously all the truths it proclaims. Alas! while we read, the devil murmurs in our ear, All that is not equally pressing, equally obligatory; we are commanded to bear with the weak; Paul made himself all things to all; he consented to offer sacrifice and to circumcise Timothy: on the other hand, edification goes before dogma; the principal dogma itself goes before the secondary dogmas, etc. One voluntarily opens the ear to a language which appears plausible and prudent; which appears not to attack a single truth, but which is only the more calculated to render them all powerless. From afar, one bows before each truth, but if it comes near to us, if it requires us to act, to sacrifice anything, at once the present truth is ranked among the truths that are out of season.”—Archives, Sept 22, 1849.

213 All the Evangelical Churches of France, composed of members who have made a profession, individual and explicit, of the faith, etc., unite themselves together. Article 4. Each church, in order to form a part of the union, must … secondly, adhere to the profession of die faith given in Article 2 (Sept. 8).

214 “In point of fact, those Christians only were called to the synod who accept the fundamental grounds laid down by the Consultative Committee, in their Circular of March 31.”—Archives, Sept. 8.

215 This expression, as well as others, shews that a Church could be called the Church, because it was that practically in the place.

216 I add here that paraggelia signifies, among other things, a “commission,” and it is evidently in this sense that Paul uses it; 1 Tim. 1:5.

Observations On A Tract,

Entitled “Plymouthism In View Of The Word Of God”

When the tract which forms the subject of these few pages was published, I did not think it worth answering.

In the country where it was first brought before Christians, the subject of which it treats had been amply discussed in other pamphlets; and Christians were sufficiently supplied with arms to enable them to defend themselves against the errors which it contains. Its intrinsic character was not such as would invite a serious person to answer it.

But in other countries the enemy has taken advantage of the fact of this article having remained unanswered. It has been reprinted in France, and circulated in places where Christians have had scarcely any opportunity for information on the points of which it treats. Triumph is easy where there is but one party engaged in the combat. Besides, one finds by experience that charity should hardly suppose that the mass of the faithful will judge what is presented, as unanswered, to their consideration; and above all if he who presents it has a just claim to their respect. Happily the faithful are for the most part occupied with other things than questions; but when once questions are laid before them, it is well that they should listen to what there is to be said on the part of those who have been attacked.

I will justify what I have said as to the insignificancy of the pamphlet of which I speak, by shewing that, whilst written (according to what those who are well informed say) by an elder of the new Evangelical Church at

Geneva,217 it gives evidence of such ignorance of the word as ought, it seems to me, to have induced its author to remain silent, as being the most suitable course, if at least he desires the respect which one would suppose due to a person invested with the title of Elder.

My answer will be a very short one. I do not wish to weary either my reader or myself.

Setting aside all the extravagancies and personal accusations of the author of this tract, I will quote the exposition which he gives (p. 6) of the system which he condemns. He makes out that we say:

“Men having failed to meet the intentions of God, by transgressing, or rather by perverting, the laws and ordinances which He had given them for their security, therefore God suppressed the economy which had failed, in order to substitute another for it. There was consequently sin in wishing to re-establish what God had suppressed.”

It is not thus that I should present my thought, for God is far from suppressing an economy as soon as man has failed to fulfil his duty under this economy. God uses long forbearance. He employs all sorts of means to recall man to his duty, until, as it is expressed in the word, there is no remedy. This is what He has shewn even with regard to those who did not enjoy a covenant, announcing to Abraham that his seed should go down into Egypt; and God adds that it should not yet possess the promised land, because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full (Gen. 15:13-16).

The author will forgive my speaking openly; but really he does not know what he says. If God has suppressed

anything, would it not be sin to wish to set it up again? The consequence he condemns, in what he imputes to the brethren, is perfectly just, and it would be an utter want of respect towards God to deny it.

The author will say, This is not what I deny; I deny that anything has been suppressed. It is not the consequence that I deny, but the fact itself whence it is deduced. God has suppressed nothing. The proposition therefore is true and incontestable. It is the fact alone on which it is founded that is disputed.

Let us remember, reader, that we are speaking of dispensations, of an order of things established by God, according to which He governs men who are in a relationship with Himself.

Has not God suppressed the order of things called Judaism?

Are we under the Jewish dispensation? Is it not true that God has substituted the Christian dispensation for the Jewish economy, or the dispensation of the law? Every one knows that. And he who would now pretend to re-establish the Jewish dispensation would be guilty of sin. The author has not really understood what he disputes; he gives a wrong expression to my thought. But still, if even my thought were what he makes it out to be, to oppose it as he does would only be folly.

Men having come short of God’s intentions, God has suppressed or set aside a fallen dispensation, and has substituted another for it. It would be sin to wish to re-establish what God has suppressed, unless we are permitted to become Jews again. But it will be said, It is impossible to suppose that the author could mean to say

that the Jewish dispensation has not been set aside and that another has been substituted for it.

And, indeed, reader, no one could have supposed it; but it is what one may read in this tract written by an elder (ordained to “hold fast the faithful word as he has been taught,” “to exhort by sound doctrine,” and “to preserve the assembly from false doctrines “).

This is what he says: “In Leviticus 26:14-16 we read, ‘But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; and if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you,’ etc. Then follows the exposition of the judgments reserved for those who shall have rejected the statutes and the covenants, but not a word of the withdrawal of the statutes or covenants which had been Satanized. Isaiah says (chap. 31:2), ‘He will bring evil and will not call back his words.’ In Psalm 111 we read, ‘He will ever be mindful of his covenant.’ ‘All his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever.’ The holy scriptures are full of threatenings against those who shall pervert or transgress the law; but nothing leaves room for the supposition that, on account of the transgressions, a new law is to be substituted for the first.”

One can scarcely imagine such ignorance. The unconditional promises made to Abraham, the covenant of God made with him, the conditional covenant of Sinai, the law in its moral substance, the statutes and ordinances set up for a time amongst the Jews, and the immutable word of God, as well as the words of Jesus, all that, it is true, is jumbled together in this article, as

may be seen by comparing what I have just quoted from it with what is said afterwards. But I do not wish to weary my reader by shewing all the confusion that reigns there. I shall confine myself to the main points of the author's assertion: "Not a word about the withdrawal of statutes or of the covenants": "Nothing leaves room for the supposition that on account of the transgressions a new law must be substituted for the first."

For my part, I did not think that there was any one, bearing the name of Christian, or any child learning his catechism, who could be ignorant that a new covenant was of necessity to be substituted for the old covenant of Sinai.

I shall now confront the teaching of the tract which I have just quoted, in comparison with the declarations of the word of God.

"But now hath he [Christ] obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant, etc." (Heb. 8:6-10). "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first

old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away," Heb. 8:13.

Do you see? A person desires, as being an elder, to teach and hold fast the faithful word, and tells us that there is not a word about the withdrawal of the covenant made with the Jews.

The attentive reader may perceive that in the chapter of the book quoted by the tract, the Spirit of God says nothing about the covenant of Sinai, and returns in its promises to those made without condition to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. (Lev. 25:42; compare also Isa. 6:3-8.) But it would be useless to enter into such distinctions, in replying to a tract which, in presence of the positive declarations of the New Testament, can hold such language as this one does.

Note that, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews, there is a first, or old covenant, and that there is also a second; that the first was ready to be abolished, and this was because Israel had not continued in the covenant that God had made with them; and that on every point the Epistle to the Hebrews expressly affirms what the tract denies, attributing it to the system which it calls Plymouthism.

The author seems to take pleasure in using all the words which could shew that he stands in open contradiction to the word of God about everything.

He not only tells us that a new covenant cannot take place, but that a new law cannot be substituted for the first.

Here is what the word says: "For, the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the

law." "For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof," Heb. 7:12, 18.

The same principle is laid down in chapter 10. "He taketh away the first that he may establish the second" (v. 9).

But the author is not contented with saying directly contrary to the word through ignorance of its contents; he must twist it by omitting, through a prepossession which causes him to mistake the bearing of it, the most essential words of the passage in Matthew 5:18, which he quotes, "For, He says, 'Verily, I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass till all be fulfilled.'"

Then the author adds:—

"Either we are much mistaken, or this really includes the universality of the economies, of the institutions and ordinances of Jehovah as far as they are contained in His word. As to ourselves we do not know of any others."

All this has a defect, and a defect of the most essential kind. The author has omitted the words "from the law." The Lord Jesus said, "Till heaven and earth pass one jot or tittle shall in nowise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." Then, after this omission, the author insists on its being a question of all the dispensations in this passage.

The truth is, he does not know what is the matter in question. No one doubts but that the law and prophets will be fulfilled some day. This is not the question. The point is to know whether the dispensation under which the law subsisted in its integrity as a rule of the

government of God, and under which the prophets exercised their ministry, has not been replaced by another.

If the prophets foretold that there would be a new dispensation and a new covenant, does the setting aside of the old one under which they prophesied, and the setting up of the new one that they foretold, invalidate their word? On the contrary, this event fulfils it. But its fulfilment is in the abolition of the preceding dispensation and in the setting up of a new one.

If the law brought nothing to perfection, if there has been the introduction of a better hope founded on better promises, and if God has introduced this better hope (the figures for the present time and the whole system founded on them being suppressed to make room for that which was better), does this weaken the force of those figures? On the contrary, they are accomplished in the reality that was foreshadowed; but the system established on the use of them is abolished.

If the law, looked at even in its moral and eternal power, curses him who infringes it, and if Christ has borne this curse, does this striking proof of the authority of the law weaken it? Clearly not. Nothing gives such a testimony to it. Does it therefore continue to be the principle according to which our relationships with God exist? Certainly not. We should be lost if it were so. We are no longer under law but under grace; Rom. 6:14,15. “It [the law] was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made,” Gal. 3:19.

Having thus placed the author’s assertion about the withdrawal of the covenant in its true light, I will add a few passages which clearly prove that, historically, God

threatened the Jews to set them aside—looked at as placed under the dispensation of the law—and that He did set them aside in consequence of their sins. Jehovah never forsakes the unconditional covenant which He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He often recalls it in grace. Read Deuteronomy 4:23-31; chap. 8:19, 20; chap. 28:63-68; chap. 29:28; chap. 30:17,18. All these passages shew plainly that judgment has fallen upon Israel by reason of their sins. By this judgment the relationships formed between God and Israel under the law, these relationships, the existence of which depended expressly on the people's obedience (Exod. 19:5), have been entirely interrupted and even terminated. The first covenant, that of Sinai, has been suppressed—abolished, as the Epistle to the Hebrews says, in order to give place to another.

The word declares the same thing with regard to the kingly power, which was the means God in His goodness used to maintain His relationships with Israel. The relationships of Israel with God by its means were broken through the iniquity of the kings; 1 Chron. 28:7. The kingdom was set up conditionally. Compare 2 Chronicles 7:17-22, where we see that the whole nation has to undergo the consequences of unfaithfulness. We see (2 Kings 23:26, 27) that the judgment of Israel was in fact brought on by the iniquity of king Manasseh. And Israel has become Lo-ammi (that is to say, the relationships between God and Israel have been entirely broken off), and that, as the prophets had so often said and repeated to the Israelites, on account of their iniquity. And I would call your attention to this, the covenant and dispensation have been set aside. God used perfect patience; but when even His Son, who

could have restored all things, was rejected by the Jews, there was no longer any way for maintaining them in blessing on the old footing. The vineyard was taken from this people and entrusted to others.

Perhaps I shall be told, We fully admit this; but it was the husbandmen who were punished: the dispensation was not suppressed; the law was not altered.

Without repeating passages, which have been already quoted on this subject, I shall confine myself to the statements, that if you say that we are still under law, you do not know what the gospel is: if you say that we are under the same dispensation, you are ignorant of what Christianity is. The Jewish dispensation is not the Christian dispensation, and Christianity is in nowise the Levitical system. This system is suppressed. It is suppressed because of the sins of those who ought to have conformed to it.

We admit that this has happened to the Jews (people may perhaps say, giving up those assertions the absurdity of which might be evident to a child), but it will not be true of the Gentile.

I reply again: The word of God tells us the contrary. The apostle says (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.” That is, the apostle applies to us what has been fulfilled with regard to the Jews. Notice also that this is on account of sin.

The principles-of the tract are therefore entirely antiscriptural.

In order to be convinced of it, one has only to compare the assertions contained in page 10 of the tract, with the quotations I have given from the Epistle to the Hebrews (quotations in which the apostle expressly contradicts what the author of the tract affirms).

Besides, the author advances a principle which it is important to take up:—

“The duration of the dispensation depends therefore neither on the faithfulness or on the unfaithfulness of Christians, but it abides independently of them, maintained by the powerful and unchangeable will of the Lord and visibly recorded in the word.”

That God makes everything to serve towards the infallible accomplishment of His will is true; but to make use of this truth in order to deny the consequences of the responsibility of man placed under God’s government on the earth, is anything but sound doctrine.

The Christian dispensation will doubtless “fill up the period allotted to it.” That is not the point. The question is to know whether God will not put an end to this dispensation on account of the sins and the rebellion of those who ought to have glorified Him according to the principles of the dispensation and the privileges which are granted in it. Now, the revelation of God is positive with respect to this. The second appearing of the Lord, to which the author alludes, has for its object the execution of judgment on the apostasy, which has ripened into open revolt against Himself. The kings of the earth will make war against die Lamb. No one will be permitted to buy or sell unless they take the mark of the beast. This terrible day will not come without the

consummation of the apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin whom the Lord will destroy by His appearing. This day will come as a thief in the night. Jehovah will even plead against all flesh. But the most terrible part of this terrible day, from which the Lord will return having His garments dyed with blood, will be the judgment of the apostates and rebels.

The author says, “faith will be changed into sight, and hope into reality”; but he does not know what he is talking about. When will that take place? We shall go to meet our Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. But the dispensation on the earth will be ended by the apostasy which will give birth to antichrist, and by judgment, that is, it will be suppressed on account of sin. According to the threat (Rom. 11) already quoted, the Gentiles not having continued in the goodness of God, the system will be put an end to by a cutting off. The passages of which I have just given a summary, are they not clear and categorical? (See Matt. 13; Rev. 19; 2 Thess. 2; 1 Thess. 5; the end of Rev. 13 and Isaiah 66.) Moreover, time would fail me to quote passages which prove that this dispensation will be put an end to by the judgment executed against those who, having been placed under its influence, shall have been found in the apostasy and the rebellion. The whole of the Apocalypse is only a revelation of that which concerns this great truth. The glory mentioned in this book is not the re-establishment of what has failed. That which has failed is judged and an entirely different glory set up.

On all these points the tract is utterly opposed to the word of God; and in contending against the truth, the author has shewn to what a degree the system which he

maintains is opposed to truth, to tile positive testimony of the word.

In the details in which a simple mind might find more difficulty. As to the re-establishment of certain means of blessing which belong to a dispensation, while this dispensation has not yet been cut off, the author is scarcely more fortunate than in what concerns the economy itself. All that is said (page 9) with reference to the Jews has nearly as little foundation. The author says that the ark only was wanting: he is mistaken. He says that the ark was a symbol of the Lord's presence: it was no such thing. The presence of the Lord was, without a figure, in the temple built by Solomon. Jehovah was seated between the cherubim; the ark served as His footstool. The whole of this remarkable object was His throne. The presence of Jehovah was manifested by a visible appearing of glory, which Israel beheld when it filled the temple. This was wanting in the temple after the captivity. The ark also was wanting, and the blood of atonement could not be put upon the mercy-seat. The Urim and Thummim, by which the high priest received the answers of Jehovah, were also wanting. The kingly power of the house of David was wanting. Israel was under Gentile dominion. Now it is not a question of knowing whether, in His patience, God bore with this condition of things and blessed Israel in spite of the absence of those means of blessing; nor of knowing whether in mercy He sent His Son, in whose Person all the blessings and means of blessing were united. No one doubts it.

What the author had to shew is, that it was possible for man again to set up that which had been lost through his failure. He will not dare to deny, that the ark, the

Urim and Thummim, the manifestation of God's glory in the temple, the possession of the kingly power by the house of David, were lost through the iniquity of the Jews; and that the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar was in consequence of the sins of the Jews. Well! was it possible for men to re-establish what depended thus on the power, authority, and grace of God? No; they could not do it. The ark was not again made; the Urim and Thummim were not re-established; the presence of the glory was not restored to the temple. The author may be bold enough to assert that the Mosaic economy was continued in its fullness, although all that was most precious, and even the presence of Jehovah, were lost; but what thoughtful reader will believe him? The Lord tells us of the generation with which He had to do, that the devil would find in it a house swept, garnished, and empty. Was it in its fulness without an ark, without the glorious presence of God, without the Urim and Thummim; that is to say, without the divine communications of the high priest with God as an oracle? without a king, the people being subjected by the Gentiles? The ordinances were not abolished, but the means of blessing had in a great measure disappeared. The Lord's body was the true temple. In order not to offend them, He submitted to what was required.

Neither must it be supposed, that what the author puts between inverted commas is a quotation from some writing of the brethren; they are only the author's own words. He tells us that we must resist the devil, and that Plymouthism says, Yield him the victory; but the conclusion which he deduces from this accusation is most remarkable: "Therefore the ordinances and offices

which the Lord in His great wisdom had given to the assemblies by the apostles," … "exist therefore in their integrity."

I seek in vain the motive of this "therefore." Even in going three preceding pages back the difficulty is not removed.

It can hardly be anything else but that the ark was not rebuilt; that the communications of the high priest with God, by the mysterious means that Moses had appointed, no longer existed; that the sovereignty established by God had been set aside, and was not restored to the throne:—it can hardly have been anything but these main facts which prove that, in the Church also, everything exists as at the beginning. The kingly office, so eminently important in Israel, did not exist in its integrity when Christ was rejected and crucified. On what then is this "therefore" founded?

However here is the object of all this. Since the word speaks of elders, we must make some. But the word spoke of the ark, of the Urim and Thummim, of a king: nevertheless men were not able to make them. The word mentions tongues: why not speak in them now?—of miracles: why not do some? And not only that; it speaks of apostles: why not establish some? This is certainly an office.

These gentlemen cannot do it. The word is not the only thing necessary; but in certain cases there must be authority, in every case power, and this is what they do not possess. They pretend to be quite able to do without it. If you ordain elders, ordain apostles also, or be such yourselves. If the spirit of anarchy is rife, they will be more useful still than your elders; they will even be

necessary, for it appears, from what the apostle says in Acts 20, that they were the only effectual barriers against the evil. But you cannot. You pretend to appoint elders, and, in order to do so, you abandon the word of God. According to what we read in the word, they were established when that was done officially, as you pretend to do it, by the apostles or by their delegates. In this, you cannot follow the word. The tract is a useful example of the result of such an attempt. I say this seriously. I believe that God warrants it. He who has been established as an elder to maintain sound doctrine declares to us that a covenant could not be withdrawn and replaced by another.

As to the author's reply to the first objection which he supposes, I say that in taking the Lord's supper, I establish nothing. You admit, "We establish brethren to govern the assembly." Who has given you the authority to establish brethren for this? To the second objection the author makes no reply, except a quibble on knowing and recognizing.218 I answer, I can know and acknowledge all those who labour according to God in the midst of His flock. Shew me your authority for establishing them. That is the question. Here are the passages which teach me to know and recognize those who give themselves to the work, by obedience to them on account of this work:1 Corinthians 16:15, 16; Philippians 2:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13; Hebrews 13:7, 17. Now shew me the passages by which you prove your authority to appoint and establish them, as I point out to you those which lead me to esteem and obey them. An exhortation to obey is quite a different thing from the authority to appoint.

To know or to recognize thus practically is quite a different thing from an official appointing. I acknowledge my father, and it is my duty to obey him. Can I appoint or establish him?

In the third place it is asked, If we cannot apply the Epistles to Timothy and Titus to ourselves, how can we apply the other epistles to ourselves? Allow me to tell you, it is by not pretending to be the equals of Timothy and Titus, and by taking your place amongst the number of the simple disciples to whom the other epistles are addressed.

Besides, I am far from saying or thinking that we cannot use these three epistles. I merely say this, that you ought not to pretend to attribute to yourselves the authority which was especially given into the hands of these two disciples on the part of the apostle himself.

I add that what is wanting is, not instructions, as the author makes out we say, but authority. But here also the author is forced to avoid (not to say that he sets aside) what the word says. We have, says the author, the office and the persons.

As to the persons, to say that we have them is to proclaim the complete capacity of the persons known to the author. We may here notice that which under our present circumstances renders the moral acknowledgment so superior to the appointing. I can acknowledge all that exists without going farther than that which exists; and I can acknowledge what is existing even when the qualifications are imperfectly developed; whereas, in order to appoint, one must find that which corresponds perfectly with the apostolical description, as the author pretends to have done.

The author continues: “It is now only a question as to the method by which the assembly is to appoint persons to the office.”

Ah! so this is the only question! It is first of all a question of knowing whether it be the assembly whose duty it is to appoint them, by whatever way it may be. “The word is silent,” says the author, “with regard to elders.” Doubtless it is silent as to the method by which the assembly was to establish them, for it makes it perfectly plain that the assembly ought not to establish them at all. It is not silent as to the method of their appointment. It speaks plainly, yes, very plainly, of their being established by others than the assembly, namely, by the apostle and by those whom he sent. We must be very prejudiced not to perceive that this phrase conceals the truth by an abuse of words. It is just as if I were to say, in a country where the crown is hereditary, that, as the constitution is silent as to the mode of electing a sovereign, the people may choose a king as they think fit. Only the case that occupies us is much more serious, because it is a question of the word of God.

However, it is not without importance to notice that, even by the confession of our opponents themselves, they are obliged to act beyond the authority of the word of God, which does not uphold their conduct in any way. They justify themselves by saying that the word of God orders them to do the thing. I reply, On the contrary, it orders persons to do it, the character of whom excludes you from all participation in such an act.

The choice of those who served tables has nothing to do here. The apostles would not meddle with money matters. Paul refused to take with him the money

destined for the poor, unless there were some persons with him for this object, chosen by the Church, whereas on the contrary he, Paul, and Barnabas chose elders for the churches.

But here the author evidently feels his difficulty. He says (p. 20), “Each assembly may follow the form which the Holy Ghost may suggest to it.” And (p. 21) “There is a way already pointed out by the word of God, for those who desire to conform to it.”

He says it is not a question of constituting the Church, but of forming assemblies such as those which existed at Ephesus. What is the difference? For what the apostles constituted are but assemblies.

I shall leave unanswered all the foolish accusations which have been a thousand times repeated, that brethren do not preach the gospel. They are words worthy to be compared to those that a parrot learns, which knows only those, and even then does not know what it is saying.

The author says that it results from the general form in which Paul gave his orders to Timothy and Titus for the formation of assemblies, that his thought was that these orders would be executed everywhere. The author seems determined to shew in all that he says his negligence with regard to the word. There exists no given order either to Timothy or Titus for the formation of churches. Timothy was in an assembly already formed and remained there, and the assemblies to which Titus was sent were of necessity assemblies already formed. As for the subject which now occupies us, it is a question about the orders given to Timothy and Titus, about the conduct they were to maintain in the assemblies—a fact

which proves that the apostle did not consider the authority of Timothy and Titus in the matter of elders as belonging to the churches. Had that concerned the churches, the instructions relative to these things would have been given to them.

The author acknowledges that “Paul ordered Titus to ordain elders.” Why Titus, if, as the author pretends the churches were capable of doing it?

In fact it seems to me that by this tract the author has given us proofs of the worth of his appointing of elders.

The most important thing, perhaps, to be pointed out is the doctrine expressed in page 11, that “the duration of the dispensation depends neither on the faithfulness nor on the unfaithfulness of Christians.” Not only is this proposition antiscriptural, it is also thoroughly antinomian. It affirms that the government of God is exercised quite independently of man’s responsibility. According to this doctrine, the sins of men have no connection with the judgment of God, nor God’s judgment on earth with their sins. I confess I would not entrust the care of my child to one professing and maintaining such doctrine.

There is one point more which it is important to make plain.

Without being able to recall to my mind all such cases, there is not a single one that I know of in which the corruption of an institution is a reason for abandoning it: so little does the author understand what the question is. What I say is, that neither he nor his friends have the right to take upon themselves and to accomplish that which depends on the power of God and the exercise of

Christ’s authority in His house; and this is what they pretend to do and to impose on others.

Then I say that (when the sins of men have corrupted and ruined what God has established, so that in spite of His great patience He can no longer use it for making Himself known) He does not re-establish that which has been ruined, but He introduces something better. If the position in which the author and those who go along with him have placed themselves hinders their seeing a truth so plainly demonstrated in the word, I am sorry for them. There is nothing clearer for any one who has not blinded himself.

Before the cutting off takes place, it is important to bring the faithful to understand that the principles of the apostasy, which is to break out publicly, already work and manifest themselves, that this apostasy is there in principle, in order that they may not go along with that which will result in it, nor with those who adopt principles which deprive them of the power and discernment necessary to avoid this snare, and to resist it according to the testimony of God.

Perhaps the author will complain of my severity. I do not doubt his being a brother worthy of respect. If this is his feeling, he has to thank the principles and the men who have placed him in a position which has led him to write such a pamphlet—a brother, who, however worthy he may be, can tell us, that there is neither withdrawal of a covenant, or its being replaced by another, nor a changing the law! He will do well to think of the effect that may be produced regarding the truth of the course which he proposes to us, by the fact of his being able to present to us that office with which he is endowed—as

consisting in this—presiding in the assembly, holding out the faithful word, as he has been taught, exhorting by sound doctrine, convincing gainsayers, watching over the assembly and preserving it from false doctrines; and that, being called to do this, it is he himself who then comes to us and says what I have just been pointing out, and, further, tells us, that the duration of the dispensation depends neither on the faithfulness nor on the unfaithfulness of Christians, thus destroying man's responsibility and the scope of the judgments of God.

I have nothing at all against him. I can even thank him for having shewn us what an elder of that which is called the Evangelical Church at Geneva is, and the worth of the appointment which has been made of such, by giving us a description of what it ought to be, in a tract which answers in such a way to the description.

217 Since the printing of the first edition of this short treatise one of the elders of the Evangelical Church at Geneva has acknowledged himself the author of the article which is refuted in these pages.

218 The "re," difference between "connoitre" and "reconnoitre."

What Has Been Acknowledged?

Or, The State Of The Controversy About Elders, Followed By A Short Answer To An Article Of Mons. De Gasparin219 You need not fear, sir, that in making some remarks on the occasion of your “Dernier Mot” (Last Word) I am attacking you afresh. That which led me to take up my pen again is the summary you have given of the state of the controversy. I wish to assert and state what that state is, and my position with regard to it.

It even appears to me that your pamphlet shews a certain compunction with regard to the contents of the preceding one. The least appearance of such a spirit should be, for a Christian, a signal for abstaining from anything which might hinder the return of the heart to better feelings, and destroy the first germs of such a return by irritating afresh him in whom God acts by His Spirit. This single reason would suffice for my not pursuing the path of accusation, even where you might afresh give occasion for it. It is this which decides me. But, in the second place, if this decisive reason did not exist, I have told you that you should be safe from all attack on my part; and I keep to what I have said.

You boast of the ground gained upon me in this controversy. I leave to you, without regret, the glory of the combat, if there is any. If truth has been manifested in a clearer way by this controversy, all will gain by it. Partisans alone will occupy themselves with the trumpet that a man sounded before him on his return from the combat. At least there will be but one of these trumpets. Whatever the value of these flourishes may be, they

shall all be yours; the attention which they attract shall be directed to you alone.

But there are certain points which I am desirous of bringing out clearly, as they are in the subjects which have been treated of, because it is a question of truth, of faith, and of the consciences of Christians.

In doing so I would call upon you seriously to observe how far it may be said that Christian uprightness has been restored by your answer; and I would draw the attention of my reader to some grave omissions which regard what lies at the bottom of the question—omissions which touch the truth that the word of God puts before our consciences—without however entering upon the controversy afresh. Then I would prove where we are with regard to some points to which I have just alluded, such as the apostasy, and others besides. This is my special object in taking up my pen.

As to that which concerns the first point, the facts are in general admitted, it is only a question as to the judgment to be borne on these facts. I leave each one to give his own. I weigh the excuses which you make in your present pamphlet, without saying a word which might wound you. I shall do nothing but place the facts in their true light with regard to certain points, so that you may have them on your conscience, the attention of which, I believe, has been aroused.

You said, “It is here necessary to copy the passages from ‘Plymouthism.’” You admit that you have not done so; you have only copied (p. 5) the thought, you say. I do not well know what “copying a thought” means. No doubt you had full right to “unfold your thought more clearly and briefly.” No one contests it. But have you a right to

say that it was copying the passage, when you had altered it much? And allow me to ask you, Do you think that “the thought is strictly reproduced”?

The passage from “Plymouthism” said, “That men having failed to answer to the intentions of God,” etc., “from that time God suppressed the economy that had failed, in order to substitute another,” etc.

This was the essential point of the passage. You render the passage thus in your second pamphlet, “When men had failed to answer to the institutions of God, and the economy is in fact by the sins of men corrupted and ruined, Mr. Darby asserts that God rejects it to substitute another for it.” Is “from that time God suppressed the economy which had failed “the same thing as “the economy is in fact by the sins of men corrupted and ruined”? Is the thought strictly reproduced? You add, “Mr. Darby affirms that God rejects it to substitute another for it, and that therefore it is a sin to wish to re-establish in its primitive condition that which God has definitively abolished.” Is “from that time God suppressed the economy which had failed,” found in the second version of the passage? The second version of your thought is nearly unintelligible, it is true; but it is so, because it has set aside this sentence, “from that time God suppressed,” etc., which is very clear, and substituted another, namely, that “by the fact of the sins of men the economy was corrupted and ruined,” a thought which is not found at all in the first version. Now this was a principal point. Then the whole subsequent controversy turns on the question of institutions and their analogy with laws which cannot be corrupted, and you have changed “intentions” into “institutions.” In fact, it was a question of the stability of

ordinances and of their corruption. And in the sentence “in perverting the laws and ordinances,” you have omitted “and ordinances” in order to leave only “laws,” which indeed could scarcely be perverted, whilst ordinances may easily be so and in fact even disappear, which cannot happen with regard to the authority of a law. Were there not important changes in precisely the principal points on which the discussion turned? I leave it to your own conscience to judge.

Then you assert that you have “reproduced exactly the very text that is the object of discussion.” “I have,” you. say, “copied verbally, between inverted commas, the conclusion that I thought was to be deduced,” etc. In fact you wrote that which you copied afresh in your “Dernier Mot.” Be it so. I did not complain of the reverse; I complained of this: you have accused me of entirely perverting the form of your thought by the subtraction and addition of words. You have, then, in order to demonstrate it, copied the passage which you have introduced here, and you have added: “Mr. Darby renders that proposition thus”; but you have omitted the half of what I have given, and that which contains the thoughts which you pretend were additions made in my rendering of it. Now I had replied to you that it was not that proposition that I had rendered, but that one and another also which contained the things which you accuse me of having added to the form of your thought, by underlining the words which demonstrated it—a warrantable accusation, if I had given only the proposition which you cited. You answer me now by reproducing the passage without saying anything about what you have omitted. Is this an answer? The question is of that which you have omitted, not of that which you

have given; of which I do not complain. This passage gives occasion for remarks, but I make none. I confine myself entirely to drawing your attention to the question, if it is an answer.

Every one can judge, if he gives himself the trouble of reading what you have written and what I have quoted, whether you have as to the substance said what I make out that you have. I do not trouble myself about the form. I speak of that sentence, page 6: “The author has not said a word of all that: it is Mr. Darby who attributes it to him.”

Then you say: “I hasten to acknowledge that I have in fact committed a typographical error, but nothing more.” But you take your stand on this typographical error (!) and accuse me of upholding (and that with regard to the conduct of the Saviour Himself) the doctrine of the rationalists. For you interpret this “all” thus: “In fact Jesus submitted himself to the law.” If I had said that He submitted to all that was required of Him, I should have understood the accusation. It would still be unjust; for to submit to all that the Jews required of Him, is after all quite another thought from what the law required of Him on the part of God. I did not make this difference appear in my “Appeal,” because the sentence entirely referred only to a particular case, and-so evidently to that and to no other, that I should have forgotten to reply to this accusation in my last pamphlet as.not worth the trouble, had not my attention been drawn to this point. Is it necessary to repeat that the words “lest we should offend them” are the words of Jesus Himself, when He paid the tribute money? I spoke of the people deprived of the glory of God in contrast with His body, the true temple, and of the submission of

the Lord to that which the Jews demanded, in reference to this temple, and not of the law of God at all.

The author is mistaken in his interpretation of what the Saviour said. Jesus did not say that He ought to be exempt, as sovereign possessor and creator of all things. This interpretation destroys all the beauty of the passage. He says, “Then are the children free; notwithstanding, lest we should offend them,” etc. As to “the accusation of treating this act of the Lord as accommodation, on account of the necessity of the case,” I leave it” subsisting in all its force “for the appreciation of every Christian. It is founded on the fact that I said that the Lord submitted to that which was required with regard to the temple in order not to offend them. The author tells us that the “moral character of the Lord is impeached by it.” James tells us “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” The author forgets that, if the remark refers only to this single occasion, as he supposes it here, he accuses the words of the Lord Himself of being a just foundation for this accusation; for I have only given them without commenting on them or interpreting them. I know it is myself that he wishes to impeach and not the Lord, but he ought to examine the passage, and know what he is about. I have given the words of our Lord without interpretation, and he says that it is attributing to Him this accommodation, that it is impeaching His moral character. Now in this case it is His own words that would do so. But this is enough on this point.

I will now point out the grave omissions in the principal point of which we treat, which are found in this pamphlet. Nothing is said on the teaching of the Epistle

to the Hebrews. Why this silence? It is the part of the word which expressly treats of this subject. Nevertheless it is impossible to get one word of answer upon it. I do not ask that the silence should be broken. The silence itself says enough. But the reader will remark that this last pamphlet makes further advance in error where silence has not been maintained. We read in it: “It [that is, the temporary curse which hangs over them, the Jews] is not on account of their sins against the old covenant.” How can any one dare to say this, when the word says the contrary? When God has said, “I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant and I regarded them not, saith the Lord”; how dare any one say, after such a declaration from the word, that the temporary curse was not caused by their sins against the old covenant? I have already called the attention of the author to these words of scripture: to say that which I have just quoted, is only to resist the truth which they teach. I quote yet another passage, so much the more remarkable because it is part of a discourse by which it may be said that the relations of God with this people at Jerusalem are terminated. I speak of Acts 7:42: “O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them; and I will carry you tway beyond Babylon.” Note this word Babylon, instead of Damascus, which is used by the prophet. Stephen refers the temporary curse, which now hangs over the Jews, to the idolatry of the people in the

wilderness when they came up out of Egypt. No doubt they filled up the measure of their resistance against the Holy Spirit in what they did to Stephen himself, who bore testimony to a glorified Jesus, whom they had already rejected in His humiliation.

It is said that what put an end to the covenant of Sinai is grace in virtue of the promises, and not the sins of men. The passages which I have quoted and all those which I have alluded to in my first pamphlets suffice to refute this assertion “and not the sins of men.” The word says the contrary, but I quote these words to shew that the contrast which people wish to make between the two things is without foundation. No doubt grace has replaced the covenant of Sinai, but that does not hinder God, who brought in grace, from putting an end to the old covenant, on account of the faithlessness of men to that covenant. The testimony of His word is positive as to this. No one denies that, when the first covenant was to be set aside, grace came by Jesus Christ. The question is: Why did God remove the first? Did not His wisdom find a just cause for this judgment in the sin of men? When Adam was turned out of the earthly paradise, grace took the place of the state of blessing, the enjoyment of which was attached to obedience of a law which was imposed on him. Nevertheless, it was a judgment from God which put an end to the previous condition of man, and did so on account of his sin.

But there is yet another principle concerned in this question. Could God have put an end to a conditional covenant—could He have taken it away—if man had faithfully observed the condition to which he had pledged himself? God had bound Himself to this covenant by a promise, if man observed a certain

condition. In case man had observed it, could God have said, I will myself take it away, I will infringe it? I said that whosoever doeth these things shall live by them; but it does not matter; you shall not live by them: I have another means, and you shall live by that means—I well know that man could not. This is what God wished to manifest, so that sin might appear sin, and "become exceeding sinful"; and this is what He has proved. Now the anti-scriptural system which I have been combating will not have it that this has been manifested. It is affirmed that (not the sins of men, but) grace has put an end to the covenant of Sinai. But they overturn all the wisdom and perfection of the ways of God by this doctrine, resisting also thus the positive testimony of the word. "The two sides," they tell us, "of a covenant are perfectly independent one of the other." This is a singular covenant at all events. Man pledges himself by a covenant, and in this respect he is no longer independent. It was infinite condescension on God's part to pledge Himself in it; but once having deigned to pledge Himself, could He fail? If He could, all hope would be lost.

It is said that the existence of the economy is not confided to the will of man; it remains independent of him; it emanates from God, and only depends on His sovereign will. This is again an error. The principles of the economy are such as God wishes them to be, but the existence of the economy depends (because God cannot fail to keep His word) on what He has declared in the covenant itself, with regard to the conditions on which it was to depend, as well as of the revelation that God has made of His character in the word. Now in that case He has made it depend, not on the will but on the

faithfulness of man, on his observation of the conditions which are imposed on him by the tenor of the covenant. It remains unshaken, they say again, until the Sovereign modifies or suppresses it at the time which He has determined for so doing. God may add blessings, no doubt, of which He has never spoken; but where does one learn that if God has deigned to pledge His word to men, He modifies His engagements at His pleasure? What a difference in the holy reasoning of the apostle in Galatians 3:15! “Though it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed no man disannulleth or addeth thereunto.” I do not doubt but that God does suppress the old covenant at the time determined for so doing. Every one acknowledges it. The question is, Why does He so? What is the time determined on for so doing? Is it not when man has failed, and when, in spite of the longsuffering of God, there is no oilier remedy? They here overthrow the faithfulness of God to establish His sovereignty.

The promises made to the fathers are without condition; God infallibly accomplishes them.

The promises made under the law are made under condition of obedience on the part of the people. “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people.” The fact is that, properly speaking, the covenant of the law was ended when Moses, at the sight of the golden calf, broke the tables. The relations of God with the people were sovereignly re-established upon the intercession of Moses by Him who said, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.” The patience of God has continued these relationships and borne with the

people. See Exodus 34:6, 7, 27. Jehovah said to Moses, “Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.” After the golden calf we find God introducing these words “with thee,” which refer to Moses who had interceded for the people. He even calls Israel “thy people “in speaking to Moses.

The question then is not whether God had determined the time, but whether, at the appointed time, He does not put an end to the covenant on account of the sins of Israel—a point on which the word leaves no doubt, and with regard to which the system which I oppose stands in full contradiction to the express word of God.

But they go yet farther. “God,” it is said, “exercised towards His people the right which He had reserved to Himself in the covenant. In virtue of this right He withdrew His glory from the temple, He communicated no more with the people by means of Urim and Thummim; the ark did not re-appear. All these things were testimonies of the favour of Jehovah; they were suppressed in virtue of the penal sanction of the covenant. But nothing of all that was a part of the law or necessary to its execution. The priesthood recommenced its functions; the altar was replaced on its foundations; and the burnt-offerings, the sacrifices, and the ceremonies were reestablished according to the ordinances.”

If the truth, which they seek to dishonour by the offensive name of Darbyism, forces its antagonists to place themselves on that ground in order to oppose it; if it is necessary to affirm such things in order to avoid the force of its conclusions (and this in fact is the case), it is

impossible to have a stronger demonstration of the truth which they oppose.

When I read “Nothing of all that was a part of the law or was necessary to its execution,” I thought that perhaps they were speaking of the ten commandments, or of the summary the Saviour gives of the law. Now the absence of these sacred instruments of Levitical worship had nothing to do, any more than their presence, with the observation of the ten commandments and the love of God and one’s neighbour. The institutions do not affect their observations in the matter, unless it be as a means and a help, but in fact they do not depart from the question so far as that. These things, they affirm, were not necessary to the execution of the law, in its ceremonial part; “the ceremonies were re-established according to the ordinances.” How can one reply to such an assertion? All the relationships of Israel with God “according to the ordinances” depended on this that the high priest put the blood of the calf and the he-goat once a year on the mercy-seat, which was the throne of the divine glory on the earth, of Him who sat between the cherubim. But there was neither glory, nor throne, nor cherubim, nor mercy-seat—the foundation of all the ceremonies was wanting. The ceremony of ceremonies on which all others depended could never be re-established according to the ordinances. Were the ceremonies re-established; and, yet further, the sacrifices and ceremonies re-established according to the ordinances, without the mercy-seat and without the glory of God to which they offered being there? Was not the mercy-seat necessary for the execution of the law on the great day of atonement? Was “execution of the ceremonial part… immediately after the return from the

captivity continued according to the book of the law" without a mercy-seat?

It is not worth the trouble of entering more into detail, nor of pursuing this subject, in the presence of such assertions which have been made after attention has been drawn to the point.

But let us return to the summary of the state of the controversy.

First of all, it is not the primitive form of the Church which has become the property of Satan, nor, it is needless to say, the true Church itself. The Church has lost its primitive form. I can understand how a person, who thinks that all the ceremonial part of the law has been again set up without the mercy-seat, may imagine that the Church also had found what it had lost. One of these thoughts is worth about as much as the other.

They tell us that God does not reject the economy, but that He punishes the sinner.

The Epistle to the Hebrews, which treats of this subject here presents itself naturally to shew what God says. But they avoid recalling its existence, by saying Leviticus 22 is the constitutive act of the old covenant. This assertion is singular enough. Now the apostle says that the old covenant is set aside; the author does not deny it. Leviticus 26 declares that in case of the wilful sin of the people God would remember the covenant made with the fathers before the law, and keeps silence with regard to the covenant of Sinai.

We must seek elsewhere the positive doctrine of the word on this point, and we cannot have a clearer testimony with regard to it.

As to the continuation of the history of the Jews after the Babylonish captivity, God had announced that this captivity would end at the close of seventy years; which was the case. As to our present condition, He has announced that, if the Gentiles do not continue “in goodness, they will be cut off,” and that the final result of the evil introduced in the time of the apostles will be the manifestation of the man of sin, whom the Lord will destroy by His appearing.

It is to positive revelations on these solemn subjects that I direct the conscience of my readers. To these solemn truths contained in the word of God, referring to a judgment which hangs suspended over the head of the professing Church, over that Christendom which is the result of the corruption of the truth and ordinances of God—in a word, of the corruption of the Church.

But now as for progress made on certain points: they say, “The apostasy of the Church as an accomplished fact has been abandoned.” I repeat what I have often said, that those who teach that the apostasy is an accomplished fact are those who oppose my views. I beg the reader to pay attention to this, because, in remembering it, he will see what is the force of many captious objections. They apply 2 Thessalonians 2 to the passage (as also the 1260 days, years according to them). Now it is there that the apostasy is spoken of, which they believe thus to be an accomplished fact. One has only to ask M. Gaussen, or (if one wishes it) to examine his books, and no uncertainty will remain on this point. Or we may take the History of the Church by M. Guers, and the headings of the pages will point out to you “The apostasy commenced,” “The apostasy in progress,” “The apostasy accomplished.” I do not know

if they have been obliged to abandon it or not. As for myself, I believe that this apostasy, in its public and formal manifestation, is future. This is what I have thought since 1827.

Instead of having abandoned the doctrine of the apostasy, such as I understand it and as I have explained it, I continue to say that I most seriously believe that it is ever most important to warn Christians of it. The principle, which will end by this terrible apostasy, was already working in the time of the apostles. Jude points out this seed of the enemy as being already entered into the visible Church, and he declares that it is of those that Enoch prophesied when announcing the judgment to be executed at the coming of the Lord. To direct the attention of the Church to this germ of that which is the corrupting principle of the Church, and which is developed in bringing in an apostasy, an open revolt, is of the highest importance. This germ has been so developed since then, that its fruits have been treated by excellent Christians, as the full “accomplishment of the apostasy.” I think that they are mistaken; but it is such a development, that morally they are right; and Jude speaks of a much more partial development as being that which was to be judged at the end: how much more then when the evil had displayed itself in such a way as to invade the world, to take possession of its power, and to establish its empire everywhere, as if this world were the Church, and the Church of this world! I believe that those who seek to weaken the impression of the testimony with regard to this evil, and to destroy the thought that it is morally the apostasy itself, are doing the work of the enemy.

I insist then, more than ever, upon this, that the result of that which is passing here below with regard to the Church is an apostasy, and that it is of all importance to point out that which has already taken place, as being this evil, as being, morally speaking, the apostasy, although its public and open manifestation may still be deferred.

Is it a little thing, that the evil which will bring down the terrible judgment of God upon Christendom exists though still bridled? Is it not important to give it its true name, its true character, although it hides itself, and because it hides itself? Now this is why people oppose this. The word declares that if this evil came in—and it shews that it had already come in at the time of the apostles—it would continue its course, would go from bad to worse, and there would be a cutting off, as took place in the case of the Jews. In a word, that judgment awaits the whole of Christendom, excepting the members of Christ who will go to meet Him in heaven before He executes it. They received the doctrine of the apostasy, when they could accuse others of it, and until it touched all the pretensions of the Gentiles, condemned by the apostle; then these doctors would not have it any longer, because their own pretensions and those of the whole of presumptuous Christendom must also fall.

I think that the forgetfulness of this solemn truth, or of its application to all that boasts itself of being Christendom, is a profound evil. The page to which we are referred does not speak another language. It is important, I say, to make the faithful understand that in principle this apostasy is there. I still insist on this point,

and, instead of abandoning it, I entreat my reader for the sake of Jesus to pay attention to it.

They say that I have been obliged to acknowledge that the economies are not rejected the moment that men have sinned against them.

The author had made out that I said this. It is one of the passages which he has altered in what he said he copied. I have never entertained the thought, except to refute it when it was presented, if, by rejecting, they mean to suppress or to set aside. In the thoughts of God, however, they are indeed rejected; but His patience does not permit Him to suppress them till there is no longer any remedy.

However, if I were anxious to be very exact, I should say that what they say I am obliged to acknowledge I do not acknowledge, for I believe that an economy is really rejected as soon as men have sinned against it. That which I taught in the passage quoted is that God did not suppress it directly, although they have made out that I say the contrary, which I have never thought. The economy which is founded on conditions is, at bottom, rejected as soon as man has failed in these conditions; it is only suppressed (on account of the patient goodness of God) when there is no longer any remedy. That which they make out that I acknowledge, I do not acknowledge; that which they make out that I say, I have never said, but quite the contrary.

As to the re-establishment of the Mosaic economy after the return from the captivity, they do not quote a page of my writings as proof of their assertion that I cannot deny it. I suppose that I said nothing about it. That these institutions were partially re-established after the

captivity is true: I do not remember having denied it. I remember having presented the Reformation as having a certain analogy with this event in a little paper which I published in 1827. I have remarked elsewhere that there are many things which could not be re-established. The author of the “Dernier Mot “says that the ceremonies were re-established according to the ordinances in spite of the absence of the ark. I do not think that he will convince a reader who knows what the blood on the mercy-seat was.

Finally, that the Mosaic economy was re-established, is what I do not accept, because it was not fully and definitively set aside before the coming and rejection of the Lord. The kingdom had been overthrown; worship had been interrupted, and never was completely re-established; but still there was a formal promise that at the end of seventy years there should be a return from captivity, their oppressors being judged. The author sends us back to pages 18,19 of my “Observations.” Now in these two pages I find quite the contrary to what they affirm, in saying that I cannot deny the re-estabUshment of the Mosaic economy. For this is what is said in them, in detailing what was wanting in the second temple: “Well, could men re-establish what depended on the power, the authority, and the grace of God? No, they could not.” I said, “The ordinances were not abolished,” which is quite true; they were not so until the death of the Lord, and as a judicial fact only when Titus took Jerusalem.

They dwell on my having “acknowledged that the economy of the New Testament is not abolished, and that its institutions still exist.”

As to the first part (that is to say, the economy of the New Testament is not abolished), I have not given to it that name (page 15 of my pamphlet to which they refer us220). One may nevertheless say, with all safety, that it is not; but I fear that it was not this controversy which convinced me of it. We all form a part of it: at least, so I have always supposed. That its institutions still exist is a question which I have not touched upon in this page of my pamphlet. I have looked through the whole tract, and find nothing which has any reference to it, except that which implies just the contrary. I have treated of it at length in my "Appeal to the Conscience." There I have shewn that one may distinguish between the law of an institution and its practical state, in that the first does not change, whereas the institution itself may be corrupted in the hands of men, or cease to exist practically. I remarked in it that, in pretending to establish elders at Geneva, they have not acted according to the divine law of the institution. Several institutions of the New Testament still exist. There are some of them which have been deeply corrupted. In some places these corruptions have been more or less removed. There are some institutions which suppose the exercise of power in order to their actual existence, and that the functions which they suppose may be in active exercise. Now if this power is not in activity, the law of the institution is not changed; but in fact the institution remains suspended as to its practical official existence. This is the case with the institution of elders. The law about them is not changed; but this law supposes, in order to their nomination, the exercise of a power which no longer exists. It would not be true to say, in an absolute way, that the institutions of the New Testament

still exist, or that they do no longer exist. I have said nothing about it that I know of; but this is my thought.

They say that I repel the allegation, according to which the system says that the victory must be yielded to Satan, and the institutions of God abandoned to him when he has seized upon them. There is no reference to this subject in the page to which the reader is referred. But I do in fact repel the allegation that one must yield to Satan.

But when they say “From whence it results that one must regain from him the institutions,” I reply, It is a question as to what God gives us to do; and if the judgment of God has deprived us of anything, by taking from us the power necessary to establish it, it is not a victory over Satan, but a victory of Satan, when they pretend to do so, and that they thus do it without God and without the authority of His word.

Now, as to the complete retractation, it only exists in the imagination of the author. I have not made any retractation as to any point whatever that I know of. I have not yet felt the necessity of making any, as to the principal point, that the apostasy has entered in principle, and that Christendom will go from bad to worse until God judges it. I feel continually more and more the necessity of insisting upon this, in order to awaken the consciences of Christians on this point. If I could cry with a voice which should resound through all the world, and make itself heard by all Christians, I would warn them of this solemn truth; as I have warned them in my weakness in the sphere in which God has placed me. I hope that God would give me grace to retract frankly every error into which I might have

fallen, when I made the discovery of it. I do not doubt but that in many details I see more clearly than when I announced that solemn and mournful truth, in the presence of which there is only the coming of the Lord that can raise up the heart; but this increase of light and exactness has only rendered the truth which I announced more clear, more urgent, more solemn for my heart and for the consciences of all Christians. I hope God will give me grace to lay it ever more strongly on the consciences of the children of God. The opposition of the party to which the author belongs, the frightful doctrines by which they seek to overturn the truth (such as that which teaches that the past economy was not set aside on account of the sins of men), only render a faithful insisting on the truth as to this subject more urgent.

The principle of the apostasy, of the open revolt of the last day, is in activity; it has produced a system which is in opposition to God. The result of it will be the cutting off of all that calls itself Christian (always excepting the true children of God, who will be taken away), and the Gentiles, not having continued in goodness, will be cut off.

I openly own and assert that God has put an end to the Jewish economy on account of the sins of the Jews. I assert that He will do as much with the economy that now exists (if they will call it economy, perhaps not a very exact term); and that it is important for Christians to recognize the just judgment of God which is hanging over their heads.

A local and secondary question has been raised, only important so far as the solution of it resolves another

more general one. It is this: can things which require power, and a special authority which supposes the integrity of the Christian system, be re-established, when this integrity has been practically lost, when the special authority no longer exists, nor the power by which this authority did once accomplish its task?

The question was as to the establishment of elders by the body which calls itself the Evangelical Church at Geneva. As to the author who defended the nomination which took place, this question is in fact decided. He says to us, “I do not pretend that the Church has followed the best course in the choice and installation of its elders and deacons. Perhaps it is possible to do it much better: I even think so in a certain measure. But it has acted according to the light that God has given it; it has been and it is blessed of the Lord. After having made trial of its ways nothing will hinder it from modifying them, according as the Holy Spirit may shew it by the word the course that it ought to follow.”

The author, the elder who was chosen, thinks that the Church has not followed the best course in the choice and installation of its elders and deacons— “perhaps it is possible to do it much better.” This renders it perfectly certain, that the Evangelical Church has not acted according to the word, for, in that case, it would have followed the best possible course, the only good and true one; it would not have been possible to do much better. It is impossible to have a more positive avowal that the choice and installation of the elders of the Evangelical Church of Geneva was not according to the word. This is what I thought, this is what I said, and this is what I still think; and it is because it is not according to the word that I do not accept it. That, when it has

made trial of its ways which are not according to the word, there is nothing to hinder it from modifying them as the Holy Spirit may shew it by the word, is no reason for conforming to its course, as long as it departs from the word.

The question of the choice of elders, at Geneva at least, is decided for him who respects the word of God. I do not pretend that it is my arguments which have produced this conviction in the mind of the author. I do not in the least doubt but that he has derived it elsewhere.

As to the principal question, which is whether God has put an end to His relationship with Israel, under the old covenant, on account of the sins of this people, I leave it to the decision of every Christian who takes the word for his guide.

Another general principle is brought out by this pamphlet, which is of sufficient importance. It is, that not only is popular election the source of authority in the Church of God, but, supposing even that someone has been duly established as an elder, the people have only to be discontented and the elder must retire. That which the popular breath has created the popular breath can destroy. “It is now for you,” it is said, “to examine before the Lord whether you judge me no longer worthy of your confidence, and if I ought to retire.”

I have only one remark to add, to express my way of thinking. They accuse me of the omission and subtraction of words. If they believe this to be true, they would do much better to say that there is dishonesty and impiety. I like frankness; I dislike the habit of speaking of things and not giving them their proper name.

P.S. I do not read the religious journals, so that I do not see the attacks which they contain against what is called Plymouthism; but just at the time this pamphlet was coming out of the press, they put the “Archives du Christianisme” of September n into my hands, and I was begged to add a word in answer to the article signed “De Gasparin.” There is as little pleasure in answering anyone who does not know what the question is, as there is in replying to those who make out that you say things that you have never said, and who, when you repudiate them, triumph in your having, as they say, abandoned your views.

However, I will add a few words.

They say that Plymouthism has tried several theories. First, it was the apostasy of the economies; then it was the corruption and the fall of the institutions; and, lastly, it was the impossibility of establishing elders since the death of the apostles.

Why “first,” “then,” and “lastly,” as if they were different theories? I should not express these things as they are expressed here; but the expressions do not matter much. I believe all the three things together. Instead of one theory replacing another, the latter only prove accessory facts, which are connected with the more general one.

There is an apostasy of this economy (for I find the remark on the expression too trivial for me to employ any other). The institutions have been corrupted without the economy being at an end. And I do not exactly believe in the impossibility of establishing elders after the death of the apostles, but in the incompetency of those who now pretend to do so: their work, according to me, is anti-scriptural.

That there is an apostasy, 2 Thessalonians 2 declares it of Christendom. That the institutions have been corrupted every protestant believes. That the method which they now follow in nominating elders, and which M. de Gasparin approves of, is not scriptural, is evident to anyone who reads the Bible, and almost confessed by Mons. de Gasparin himself. What is said of the three theories being tried one after the other, has no foundation whatever.

Moreover M. de Gasparin, as far as it appears, does not know what the question is. He says: “The Church and its offices belonging to the economy, and this economy having apostatized, there is nothing more to be said of offices and of elders to be set up.” Why? The offices might exist as any other form, although the fundamental principle of the existence of the economy might have been completely denied.

I have already sufficiently answered that grossly anti-scriptural idea, that it is not the sin of man which brings about the suppression of an economy. I beg the reader to pay full attention to this. Such an assertion (and it is approved of by M. de G.), is sufficient to judge the whole moral system which it is employed to sustain, and to prove what is the biblical knowledge of those who employ it.

They wish to make it appear that I have acknowledged that my first position was untenable. I am very sorry; but instead of believing it untenable, I believe it more important than ever.

I should have been quite ready to suppose that the first publication of my thoughts on this subject might have contained something inaccurate, as it generally happens

when fresh light shines into the mind of man; but I have been led, by the attacks recently directed against this doctrine, to read this first publication again; and I find it more reserved than I should have thought, and very conclusive for whosoever recognizes the authority of the word. They add that I even expressly allow that the evangelical economy has survived the very profound failure of Christendom. Yes, I do allow it most expressly. Until now I have never found an idea to the contrary excepting in the dreams of my adversaries. Where have I said that the economy had come to an end? I have preached and taught by word of mouth and by writing that the coming of Christ will be the term of it.

That fine idea, that the economy of which we form part has already come to an end, is entirely due to the bright imagination of my adversaries.

As to the assertion which follows—that Christians ought to abandon the institutions to Satan—when M. de Gasparin can shew this in my writings, I will reply to it. Further, sin does not suppress the institutions, but the latter may be practically corrupted by men and abandoned by men.

The apostles, say they, have not enjoined the abandonment of their institutions. What a profound remark! But if men have abandoned them without its being enjoined—and if in consequence they have not existed practically during seventeen centuries—can M. de G. re-establish them practically, so as to bind the conscience, as the apostles did in nominating elders? If not, he causes divisions. He is guilty of schism in imposing that which has no divine authority, and in

excluding those who do not accept that which is not according to the word.

They tell us “that, finally, they have proved that the duration of the institutions of the Church was everywhere fixed so as that it should equal that of the evangelical economy, that is to say, fill up the interval which separates the first and second coming of the Saviour.” Where have they proved that? Now there is still the same sophistry here. “The institutions were to fill up the interval,” etc. Have they filled it up? The law of the institution has not changed; but has the institution, as a fact, continued to exist practically? If it has, why so much trouble to prove that they have the right to reestablish it? Wherefore “discoveries “with regard to the means of doing so? No, it has not continued to exist, and it is because it has not thus continued that they seek by so many arguments to shew that they have a right to re-estabhsh it by other means than those shewn in the word. Note this well. The law of the institution still exists; the institution does not now exist. It cannot now be re-established according to the law of scripture; and they seek to re-establish it, in fact, by violating the law which ever exists.

But again: Where is the duration of the economy itself fixed in the word? Where is it said that it should be long, and that there should be a means of prolonging its institutions? For my part, I deny that this is said. The scriptures speak of it in a perfectly different spirit. I plainly affirm that nothing is arranged in the word with a view to the prolonging of the economy, unless the sleep of the ten virgins be called an institution. That the Bridegroom has, in fact, delayed His coming, we know; but I challenge my adversaries to shew me any

ordinance of God which sanctions the state of things which is the result of this. I assert that the word always treats this state as a state of ruin and of sin, which will bring in the judgment of God. This is the great controversy between us.

Now here we have that which, while allowing that it is not proved, is the avowal of the true state of the question. They tell us “that even supposing that the New Testament never presents to us the election by the Church, as interposing in the nomination of elders, it would not be less evident that God, in ordering us to have elders, and in taking from us the primitive mode of nomination and installation, would authorize and enjoin our employing another way. Liberty in the choice of means is the common right of the churches.”

First. It is plain that, if there is a mode primitively ordained by God, that is the law of the institution, and there is no question of a liberty of choice.

Secondly. Besides, God has never ordered us to have elders. He has only given us the historical account of their nomination and of their installation. There is no command beyond the institution itself, according to the primitive mode, which (admitting the supposition) God has taken away. The institution itself as a law is nothing else than this mode which God has taken away.

Now has God taken away this original mode in order to establish another? Clearly not. We have not another revelation, and there would be no liberty of choosing if God had established another mode by His authority. Now has God abrogated the law of the institution? It is there in the word as the mode appointed by His sovereign authority. How then has He taken away the

primitive method? It is historically the fact; it is the practical failure of the institution in the hands of men, and this to such a degree that it may be said that God has taken it away. For the law subsists, it has not been taken away. It is as an institution virtually existing amongst men: that God has removed it, as well as the means of re-establishing it according to the law of the institution, according to the primitive mode, you may say. That is to say, practically the thing has failed. God, acting in judgment (for He has not changed the law), has removed it. He has by this judgment rendered it impossible for man to re-establish it according to the primitive law of the institution; for (it is supposed) God has taken away the original mode. Then, although God may have removed it in judgment, man will re-establish it by his liberty; and although God may have rendered it impossible to do so according to the law of the institution (for God has taken away the primitive mode), man will follow another mode, will establish a law according to his liking. “It is the common right of the churches.” Here is fine liberty! The law of God (I speak of His institutions) is attached to an exceptional fact, transitory in its nature; and consequently man may afterwards thus do what he pleases.

The sacred canon, you tell us, has preserved the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. Yes, truly; but it is to shew a law of the institution, which you cannot follow, and to prove that, in pretending to re-establish what God has removed, you despise at the same time both the judgment which removed it and the law which established it, by re-establishing it after another mode according to what you call liberty, that is to say, your own will. For God has, in fact, removed the institution,

and not the law of the institution, which still exists in these epistles and elsewhere in the New Testament, in all its force, so as to condemn you.

This is a supposition, do you say? It is your own supposition which betrays your principles in the conclusions which you deduce from them. But it is more than a supposition. “The discovery of the means, you say, is not difficult.” This is true. Outside the authority of God, there is only the will of man. This is the path that you have followed. It is quite evident, that, if one respects the word, one has not to make discoveries. If you have any to make, it is because you have abandoned the word. If you do the work which you give out, I sincerely exhort you to examine more fully the responsibility of man, and its consequences with regard to the dispensations. This is the true question. It is not right to shake the fundamental principles of the ways of God for a question of elders.

219 Geneva, 1852.

220 Observations on a Tract, entitled “Plymouthism in View of the Word of God,” see page 271 of this volume.

An Appeal To The Conscience

Of those who take the title of “Elders of the Evangelical Church at Geneva”; and a Reply to one of them Is it not true, sir, that this time it is not merely one of the elders of the Evangelical Church at Geneva (for it appears that I was not mistaken as to the author of “Plymouthism,” etc.) who has laboured to bring forth these “Remarks addressed to my Brethren in Christ, on the subject of Mr. Darby’s last tract”? At least here is my reason for thinking so: I have not, it is true, much acquaintance with him who enjoys this imposing position and has invested himself with a title to which he seems to hold greatly; but it is well known that it is not a person who has lived in obscurity like myself and many others, happy, as I esteem it, amongst the poor of this world. He has lived in public, been deputed by churches and societies to represent them in other countries; in a word, he has taken his place in the annals of the evangelical world. Well, as I suppose, at least, he has always been found upright, straightforward, sincere, incapable of those subtleties, of those roundabout ways, those cunning devices which, when employed in a publication, fix the attention of intelligent men upon the author, rather than upon the arguments directed against his opponent, which bring under notice him who employs them, rather than him against whom they are employed.

I do not wrong you, when I suppose that you have always enjoyed the reputation which I here give you. How then could I attribute to yourself alone the little tract which bears, not your name, it is true, but in its place your ecclesiastical capacity, and which is evidently

so far from that integrity and simplicity of heart which are the true glory of the Christian, and even of the man of the world? Must I believe that the system of which you are one of the heads is responsible for the change in the character of the individual, a change which ought so much to be deplored; and that your tract is in fact the expression of the general sentiments, the fruit of the thoughts and actions of the body of elders to which you belong? or should I rather say, do you see what the flesh is even in a Christian? This honourable Christian could not resign himself to being looked upon as beaten. He has associated with himself one who, aiding him in his work, has employed subtlety and insincerity, which the responsible author has not had sufficient penetration to discern or sufficient courage to reject. To confess one has been in the wrong if one is convinced of it, or even if one is not, to remain silent if one does not know what to say, this dishonours no one. But it grieves an upright mind to see the ingenuousness of an honourable person changed into the cunning of an ecclesiastic.

It is for you, sir, to explain how this has happened, and for me to give proofs of it, however painful the task may be.

Here are your words, sir: “Mr. Darby, not being able to answer it, entirely alters it (that is, the form of your arguments) by the suppression and addition of words. Here are the two versions in comparison with each other. The text of my tract is, ‘The holy scriptures are full of threatenings against those who may pervert or transgress the law; but there is nothing to give room for the thought that, on account of transgressions, a new law must be substituted for the first.’ In page 10 of his tract221 Mr. Darby words this proposition thus: ‘The

author says, not only that a new covenant cannot be made, but that a new law cannot be substituted for the first.' The underlined passages point out the alterations." This is it, sir, is it not?

Here is my answer. I have quoted textually, without alteration, addition, or supervision, word for word, what you have said on the subject of the discussion. (See pp. 7, 8 of my tract.) This you know full well, sir. I have done more; by giving it separately, I have pointed out the part which I desired to answer, as being the substance of your assertion. Besides which, the text of your tract gives more than what you say. You have not put your two versions in comparison one with the other; you have omitted and concealed the half of what you said in your first tract, the half of that which is the subject of my remarks. You have not acted uprightly in only giving a part. By omitting the half of what you had said, you have given to my version the appearance of having added to your thoughts, and of having perverted the form of your argument; because the first part of what I say refers to that which you have omitted from the rest of your tract which I quoted. You have acted without straightforwardness, sir, in doing so, or else some one has thus acted in your name. You have succeeded in attaching a character of dishonesty to your title of elder, if you have saved your name from it. I have no regret that this should be the case. I attribute what I deplore to your position, rather than to your nature.

You underline "on account of transgressions," as if, because it is not found in the first part of my answer, I had omitted an important clause, which modifies your statements. You know full well that, after having spoken of the change of covenant, I even devoted several pages

to the consideration of this point. You cannot, sir, deny anything of that of which I accuse you. I pity you, sir, for having entered on this subject, and for having friends who have made you act thus, and have attached to a name which I believe to have been irreproachable such a mode of acting. Having exactly reproduced your words, it was in my province to explain their bearing in my own, and this is what I did. I have nothing to alter in them: it is you, sir, who have misconstrued my argument, by concealing the half of what you had said on the subject which I treat of in my pamphlet.

Here are the details. Before commenting on your words, I drew attention to the part which I wished to answer, by saying, “I shall, in the main, confine myself to the author’s assertion.” Nothing could be clearer or more straightforward. Here is this part: “Not a word of the withdrawal of the statutes or of the covenant.” “Nothing leaves room for the supposition that a new law must be substituted for the first on account of transgressions.” Thus the phrases in your tract on which I comment, are very clearly pointed out. How have you acted, or rather how have you been made to act? You say, “Here are the two versions in comparison one with the other. The text of my tract is, The holy scriptures are full of threatenings against those who may pervert or transgress the law; but nothing gives room for thinking that, on account of transgression, a new law must be substituted for the first.”

Then you complain of my having said “Not only a new covenant could not be made,” etc. In fact there is nothing in your version to which these words of my pamphlet apply. But why? Is there any addition of words on my part, by which I misconstrue your doctrines? It is

not a question of words, for I give my explanation of your thoughts. I express it. I have added nothing. No, sir, the fact is that while pretending to present these two versions in comparison one with the other, you have yourself left out the half of that on which I comment. These are the words of your pamphlet, “Not a word of the withdrawal of statutes or covenants.” Is this ingenuous, sir?

Then you say, “In page 10 of his tract, Mr. Darby renders this proposition thus.” This time, it is I who underline, sir. Well, you have deceived your reader. It is not this proposition that I rendered. The text of your tract gives that which you have not quoted here; and that portion of the words now in question, on which I specially comment, is not to be found in what you have quoted of them. You have not given the two versions honestly as they exist in comparison one with the other. You have omitted a passage which I particularly pointed out as the subject of my comments. Why did you omit “not a word of the withdrawal of statutes or covenants,” and then underline the words “not only” and “covenant could not be made” as if there was nothing to which these words referred? This is not, sir, the proposition which you indicate as being “that proposition,” as you affirm, that I rendered. I called attention to the withdrawal of the covenant, which I desired to treat of as being at the bottom of the author’s assertion, and the portion you designate, by underlining it, as if it were a misconstruction of your statement, plainly and precisely relates to what you have omitted and which I had quoted and pointed out. You have not, I repeat, placed the two versions in comparison one with the other. The proposition which you have given, as being the one

which I rendered, is only the half of it; and the principal thing which you point out in my version as being inexact, relates to the part which you have omitted. And if the part which you have suppressed were found there, everybody would see that what I said was perfectly correct. Is the expression “this proposition” truthful? I leave you the task of appropriating the accusation which my question implies, to whomsoever it may belong.

As to the second expression which you underline, I see nothing in it which has been altered, and nothing to alter. You said, “There is nothing to give room for the thought that a new law must be substituted for the first.” I gave as the substance of the assertion in your tract that “a new law could not be substituted for the first.” You quote Matthew 5:18, a passage which declares that “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle [from the law] shall in nowise pass till all be fulfilled”; and you apply it most explicitly to the universality of the dispensations, of the institutions, and ordinances of Jehovah, so far as they are contained in the word. This is nonsense; but this is not my fault. You have mutilated the passage quoted in its principal point, as everyone can ascertain by comparing your quotation with the passage in the Bible, where it is said, “one tittle shall in nowise pass… from the law.” But if a single jot or tittle shall not pass from the universality of dispensations, I am perfectly right in saying a new law cannot be substituted for the first. What is the difference, in the main, as to the author’s assertion (if the word of God be recognized as an absolute authority) between “there is nothing to give room for the supposition that a new law must be substituted for the first,” and “a new law cannot be substituted for the

first”? always remembering that the author thinks to uphold his assertion by the declaration of our Lord in Matthew, “One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass.” Explain to us, sir, what the alteration is.

I have not had the advantage of the teaching of the elders of the Evangelical Church at Geneva, and the distinction is too nice for me. You have said that nothing in the word of God gives room for the thought that a new law must be substituted for the first, that heaven and earth shall pass away before the least tittle of it passes away, and I make out that you say that a new law cannot be substituted for the first. This is the form which I have given to your thought. Have the goodness to enlighten me, sir; for up to the present moment I cannot understand in what I have altered it.

But I full well understand the alteration which you have made when you say that I was rendering a certain proposition when there was another one still, and when you say that the text of your tract contained something, as though that were all, whereas it contained other things also, and it was precisely those that were in question, and which you concealed by omitting them. This distinction, which you point out as an alteration which perverts your thought, is too nice for the perception of those who are not elders.

But do not let us dispute about words, sir. I surrender to you all that you ask with regard to the use of your own expressions. I will put my own entirely aside. I will no longer’ regard it as sufficient to quote you textually, and then to give a form to your thoughts in my own words; we will take yours as the only just expression of your own doctrine.

This is what you say:

“There is nothing to give room for the thought that on account of transgressions a new law has been substituted for the first.” This is exactly it, even to the underlining, is it not? What do you think of it? Is this sound doctrine, or have you indeed talked nonsense? Does not the word give room for the thought that a new law must be substituted for the first? What do you say about it? Pardon me if I use the Socratic form in my argument, and question you a little. You have the whole body of elders, the presbytery, to aid you in your answer. One of the elders will surely not refuse to give account of his doctrine. You will understand, sir, now that, reading in the word “For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before” and “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change of the law,” “He taketh away the first that he may establish the second” and not enjoying the teaching of the Evangelical Church at Geneva, we, simple Christians (idiotai as they were formerly called) find it difficult to understand how there is nothing to give room for the thought that a new law should be substituted for the first. But you will say to me, You misconstrue my thought, you have omitted “on account of transgressions.” But it is not so, sir; this phrase, in my idiotism, shuts me up in still further difficulties. We, who have only the Bible, without the teaching of your elders, have read, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I

regarded them not, saith die Lord," Heb. 8:8,9. And again, Romans 11:22, etc. We do not understand how it is not on account of transgressions that a new law must be substituted for the first, and how there is not a word of the withdrawal of the statutes and covenants, at least of the covenant, for it is necessary to distinguish between them. We have seen that it was upon those who fell that God exercised His severity. Now this severity was the cutting off of the unbelieving, the covenant of Sinai being abolished, as we have just seen. Is not this plain, sir? The law was changed, a new one is substituted on account of transgressions; the covenant has been withdrawn because Israel did not continue in it. We have been led to think that the words "because they continued not" fully indicated a transgression, and that it was on account of this that God substituted one covenant for another, and that this is the reason why God regarded them not. I venture to remind you that it is a question of the covenant of Sinai, where the law was given, and blessing under condition of obedience, and that it is also a question of the more excellent covenant.

I exhort you to read Hebrews 7 and 8 before again entering upon this subject; because the point is to explain these passages to us; they are an authority for us. But I must return again to detail.

You have underlined these words "on account of transgressions" as if I had omitted this subject in my answer, because it is not found in the phrase which you have quoted from my tract. Have I really omitted this question in my tract? Have I really neglected this thought which you have put forth? You well know that it is not the case.

I devoted pages 12-15 to the discussion of this point. In them I profess, after treating the question as to the fact of the withdrawal of the covenant, to demonstrate plainly that God threatened to set aside the Jews viewed as abiding under the dispensation of the law, and that He set them aside in consequence of their sins, and I end the paragraph thus: “The first covenant, that of Sinai, has, says the Epistle to the Hebrews, been suppressed and abolished, in order to give place to another.” I have expressly treated of these two questions. Has the covenant been withdrawn? Was it withdrawn on account of transgressions? I have suppressed nothing, sir: you have deceived your readers, you could not deceive mine.

I have clearly shewn that a new covenant has been substituted for that of the law, and this on account of transgressions, by quoting on this last point Deuteronomy 4:23, 31; chap. 8:19, 20; chap. 28:63 to the end; chap. 29:28; chap. 30:17, 18; Exodus 19, for the condition of obedience; 1 Chronicles 28:7; 2 Chronicles 7:17 to the end; 2 Kings 23:26, 27; adding allusions to Hosea 1 and to the parable of the husbandmen, in order to shew that the vineyard was taken away from this people on account of their conduct. Then I discussed the question whether the parable of the husbandmen did not identify itself with the suppression of the dispensation and the change of the law. I also quoted Galatians 3:19; Romans 11:22; that is, I fully discussed all that you had said, even proposing, as a particular subject, that which you pretend that I suppressed so as to pervert what you said. But again, sir, the expression which you now give of your thought is not straightforward; what you say of it is not true.

You pretend that you wished to shew that God does not change His laws on account of sins during the course of a dispensation. But, sir, this is not what you sought to shew in your first pamphlet. You spoke of the withdrawal of statutes or of covenants which had been Satanized. Now to speak of the withdrawal of a covenant, during the course of a dispensation, would be pure nonsense. Your thought is very plain and evident. The covenant being withdrawn, the dispensation is naturally at an end. If your friends have made you ashamed of your mistake, you would have done better to confess it. The covenant of Sinai and the dispensation connected with it exist and fall together. It is only deluding oneself as to the meaning of words thus to distinguish between the two.

In using Matthew 5:18 you assert that the truth contained in it comprehends, not only a dispensation, but the universality of dispensations. You affirm that it is an exposition of the judgments reserved for those who have rejected the statutes and covenants, in contrast with the withdrawal of the covenant itself, a withdrawal about which you say there is not a word in Matthew; adding, “He hath remembered his covenant for ever.” It is not true that the meaning of your proposition is, that God does not change His laws on account of sins during the course of a dispensation. The dispensation ceases when the covenant is withdrawn. Tell me, sir, was not the hand of Joab with you in all this? And yet you have put your own to it. No one can mistake it; but the mixture of inconsistencies and subtleties has a curious effect.

I shall first point out the inconsistency of the arguments and the groundless assertions, then the subtleties, and lastly, the doctrine of the word. But before doing so,

allow me to make a remark to you, which it is possible that you may not understand, although you be an elder. That which is very deep for the spirit of man often conceals something which is very simple in the eyes of God. You complain, as though it were a wrong way of acting, of my having accused you of advancing doctrines which are antinomian in their tendency. Well, I repeat this accusation, sir; and I add that in your present tract you have greatly aggravated that which you had previously advanced. I do not in the least accuse you of sinning deliberately, of saying, “Shall we sin that grace may abound? “I do not say this, because I do not believe it. I am convinced that you do not understand the full force of what you say. If you wish to know my whole thought, I do not even believe you to be the author of this part of your last pamphlet. To be sure, I may be mistaken in this respect; but, in this motley ill-joined piece of workmanship which your tract presents, this portion of it does not give me the impression of having been written by you. I do not doubt your first pamphlet being entirely your own; and it seems to me you might have devoted yourself to a work which would have done you greater credit. But I am far from accusing you of being the sole author of the second, and I shall not lay on you the burden of all that it contains of a bad and dishonourable character. If I have seen more sensible pamphlets than the first, I have certainly seen more honourable, simple, and straightforward ones than the second. Let us now look at the inconsistencies and groundless assertions.

You say, It is here necessary to transcribe certain passages from “Plymouthism,” etc., in which, as far as one can understand it, Mr. Darby’s system is formally

expressed. Would you not have done better to transcribe what Mr. Darby said? Perhaps some reader may suppose that the “Plymouthism” is Mr. Darby’s; but I beg him clearly to understand that my opponent pretends to quote his own tract as the expression of my principles. “He [Mr. Darby] teaches,” says one of the elders, “what he calls the * apostasy of the dispensations,’ that is to say, that when men have failed as to the institutions of God, by transgressing or perverting the laws which He gives them for their security, the dispensation is, by the fact of men’s sins, corrupted and ruined. Mr. Darby asserts that God rejects it in order to substitute another or some other thing for it; and that consequently it is sin to wish to re-establish in its primitive condition that which God has definitively abolished. From this principle it follows that the Church having, according to Mr. Darby, apostatized, the Christian dispensation or new covenant is rejected of God, together with its institutions and all that which concerns the formation of churches.”

There are two things here: some teaching of Mr. Darby’s, and a consequence deduced from it by the elder. Let us examine the teaching first of all. Where has Mr. Darby taught that? Would it not have been well if you had quoted some passages which would shew it? Doubtless, you have none. What could you do? Your sentence is, however, cleverly put together. It seems to me that your Joab has been here. The sentence leads the reader to believe that I teach just the contrary of that which, in truth, I have taught on the question which we are treating, but you do not say so. “When men failed, etc., the dispensation is, by the fact of men’s sins, corrupted and ruined. Mr. Darby asserts that God rejects it in order to substitute another for it.” “Rejects it”!

When, sir? You give it to be understood that I teach that, when men have failed, the dispensation is ruined, and that when it is ruined God rejects it, and that thereupon it is sin to re-establish that which God has definitively abolished. What does this thereupon mean? You will not deny that if God has abolished anything definitively, there is sin in wishing to re-establish it. In that case your sentence has no sense in it; it has no force if it be not connected with “when man has failed” consequently making out that, in that case, I say, as soon as man has failed, God substitutes another economy. It is perfectly true that you have not said so; but in that case, what did you mean to say? God has certainly substituted the Christian for the Jewish dispensation. It would be mere folly to deny it. “He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.” You cannot deny that men have failed. To deny it would be to justify the transgression of the law, and the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus by the Jews. You would not dare to do so. But, again, if you deny that the vineyard has been taken from these husbandmen, because of their failure; that the covenant has been changed, because they did not continue in it; you contradict the express and positive teaching of the word of God—you did so in your first pamphlet. I will not impute it to you any longer, since you say that you meant to say that God does not change His laws during the course of a dispensation.

Thus, of that which you impute to me, I am right in saying that one dispensation is substituted for another which is definitively abolished: that it is abolished because men have failed, have broken the covenant, and not continued in it. Further, there has been failure, both with the Jews and also with Christians. On this we are

agreed, and you did not give an exposition of Mr. Darby's system to shew that you agreed with him.

But, in fact, there is yet another thing in the formula, which you give to his system: it is found in the word "when." It is when man has failed, that these things happen. This is the thought which you blame. Is it not so, sir? If not, what you say is only a pure mystification. Now there is this difficulty, namely, that in the pamphlet to which you reply I have said precisely the contrary.

In your first pamphlet you openly said of my doctrine what you now state covertly; in the first you made out that I say, that as soon as men had failed, God suppressed the dispensation that had failed. I answered you, that it is far from God to act so; that He is longsuffering; that He employs all sorts of means to recall man to his duty, until there is no longer any remedy. You now repeat this accusation in terms which have no value whatever, if they have not the same meaning, but you do not say so. You present it as a necessary consequence of my system, and you say, "From this principle it follows, that the Church having, according to Mr. Darby, apostatized, the Christian dispensation, or new covenant, is rejected of God with its institutions. You attach this doctrine to my system, as though it were a necessary consequence. Now it is not a necessary consequence of the principles which have been laid down, that it is rejected, unless the dispensation also be rejected as soon as man's failure occurs. You have admitted this, that I acknowledge "that the dispensation of the New Testament will doubtless fulfil the period allotted to it." In that case, I clearly teach that it is not yet rejected.

Moreover, the consequence which you deduce from what you call my principles is no consequence at all, unless the dispensation be rejected as soon as corruption and ruin come in; for the dispensation is not rejected, as an accomplished fact, because of corruption having come in, if it be not rejected when the corruption is come in. Now, I had expressly denied this doctrine. I said, on the contrary, that God was long-suffering, until there was no longer a remedy.

I will recapitulate what I have stated. I have said that the system which God had established has been corrupted, but that God is long-suffering, and uses every means for recalling men to their duty, until there is no longer a remedy, before suppressing the system which has been corrupted, but that, at last, when there is no longer any remedy, He does suppress it and establishes another. You say that, from this principle it follows, that this corruption having come in, the system is rejected with all its institutions. Every one can judge, whether the consequence that you deduce from my principles is a just one. Both my words and principles are in direct opposition to what you make out that I say. But I am wrong to argue, sir. I had begun, I had finished half of the preceding argument, clearly seeing the subtlety of this effort which is made to represent my words falsely. I had fully seen that you spoke of “transcribing here certain passages from ‘Plymouthism,’” and I said to myself, Here is surely the elder! He jumps at his own thoughts. Then, as I told you, I saw the subtlety of the transformation which the accusation had undergone. But, sir, I have just been looking at what you pretend to transcribe. My reader will pardon me if, having placed confidence in your integrity, I have therefore wearied

him by seeking to unveil the subtleties of your argument. But what shall I say, sir? This confidence has ceased. You complain of my having said that your doctrine has an antinomian tendency. I go yet farther, I accuse you of notorious dishonesty.

You say, “It is necessary to transcribe here certain passages from ‘Plymouthism,’ etc., in which, as far as one can understand it, Mr. Darby’s system is formally expressed. He teaches what he calls ‘the apostasy of the dispensation,’ that is to say, that when men failed, as regards the institutions of God, by transgressing or perverting the laws which He gives them for their security, the dispensation is, by the fact of men’s sins, corrupted and ruined. Mr. Darby asserts that God rejects it in order to substitute another, or some other thing for it, and that, consequently, it is sin to wish to re-establish in its primitive condition that which God has definitively abolished.” Then you deduce the consequence of which I have already spoken.

Here is the passage taken from “Plymouthism,” p. 6. “At first, if our memory is good, he taught the apostasy of the dispensation, namely, as far as the meaning of the proposition can be exactly understood, that, men having failed as regards the intentions of God by transgressing or rather by perverting the laws and ordinances which He had given them for their security, therefore God suppressed the dispensation which had failed, in order to substitute another or something else for it, and that, consequently, it was sin to wish to re-establish what God had suppressed.” Is this what you call transcribing, sir? You have basely deceived your reader! I have even allowed myself to be deceived by it. The impossibility of imagining such an act led me to reason as I did. You

have altered the whole bearing of the sentence. One version says, “The dispensation is corrupted and ruined.” The other says, “Therefore God suppressed the dispensation which had failed.” You knew perfectly well what you were about, because you introduced the rejection of the dispensation as an accomplished act, as being a necessary consequence of my principle, and you add “God rejects it” in general terms, and “God has definitively abolished it,” in order to open the way for the consequence, which, without openly saying so, you wish to deduce from it.

But I still admit too much as to integrity. The sentence beginning “From this principle it follows” is one of those which you, sir, have transcribed from the tract called “Plymouthism,” etc. Here it is, just as it stands in your first pamphlet: “The Church having apostatized, or, according to the new form of the proposition, the Church having allowed Satan to take possession of the institutions which God had given it, Christians ought henceforward to abandon them to him.”—Plymouthism, p. 7. Do you, I repeat it, sir, call that transcribing passages?

I am a poor sinner, and have no other hope but the grace of my God; but I desire, in controversy, to have to do with straightforward persons, and you will pardon me if I cease—it grieves me to say it—having any more controversy with you. I must repeat what I said before perceiving this,222 that I do not impute to yourself all that I find in your pamphlet; but it is not for me to unravel what is yours, and what belongs to him or them with whom you are associated. I leave you the task of doing it, and also the intimacy which such a task requires. I shall continue my observations on the

subject, at the same time warning my readers against the subtleties which are found in your pamphlet. But, henceforth, sir, you are secure from all attacks or remarks on my part. I leave you to your own reflections and the reputation which you have won for the functions of elder.

I here beg my reader to remark, that the object of the arguments in the second pamphlet, is to bring forward the institutions, as being laws, established by God in an abstract way, and to deduce from this as a consequence, that, since a law once given always remains the same, institutions and laws cannot be corrupted. Men may fail as regards them, but the institutions exist. Here is the reason for “fail as regards the institutions of God.” What could not be denied with regard to men has been changed into “fail as regards the institutions of God.” This is why, instead of “by perverting the laws and ordinances which He had given them,” we simply find “by perverting the laws which He gives them.” For no one can deny that men have perverted the ordinances. This is why, when I said “the ordinances were not abolished,” they made out that I said “the ordinances of the law existed after the captivity of Israel”; and this becomes, a little farther on, “He does not change His laws, not considering them corrupted and ruined,” and then, “if, therefore, the ordinances of the law were maintained after the captivity,” etc.

Now it is clear that the laws themselves cannot be corrupted; and if one considers the institutions in an abstract manner, that is to say, the law that institutes them, they are what they are according to that law, and that comes to the same thing; it is a law. But the word “institutions” and above all the word “dispensation”

have another meaning. It is a question of an established thing entrusted to man. The royal power in David's hands was an institution of God; the intention, rule, and thought of God have not changed. The institution, speaking abstractedly, is not abolished, for Christ will be King of the Jews. But was not the institution, the ordinance, in point of fact corrupted in the hands of men? Was not the royal power corrupted in the hands of Manasseh, ruined in the hands of Zedekiah? The institution of the Lord's supper, if we take the gospels as an immutable rule, is always the same as to its character, but was it not corrupted when the mass was made out of it? The truth is that the word "institution "has a double signification: the rule which institutes, and the thing which is instituted. Now the rule does not change; in this respect the word is equivalent to a law; but if one takes the thing instituted, as it exists in the hands of men, it may be deeply corrupted: this cannot be the case with a law, because law is essentially what it is. It may be disobeyed. It cannot be corrupted; but a thing instituted may depart from the rule according to which it was established. It may be corrupted and yet not be abolished; it may have ceased to exist, and yet not have been abolished by God. It may finally be abolished by the power which created it. Moreover, a dispensation may be brought to an end by the authority of God, and another introduced in its stead. The condition may be one of corruption, and the patience of God may bear with this condition as long as He can act on consciences in spite of the corruption. When He puts an end to a dispensation on account of the corruption that exists, His purposes are accomplished just the same, although it be on account of corruption that He does so [put an end to it].

All this has occurred with regard to the Jewish dispensation, and the Christian dispensation is threatened with the same doom. Now it is a sophism, and a sophism having the most antinomian tendency possible, to say that, because the law that founds the institution or the dispensation cannot be other than it is, therefore the thing that is founded cannot be corrupted. Nothing can abrogate the authority of that which has been said on the part of God; but if man has entirely failed with regard to it, and if thus a thing which required the power of God to establish it fails in the hands of men (the kingly power among the Jews, for example), the pretension to re-establish it is a false pretension, derogatory at the same time both to the judgment which removes the ruined thing, and to the authority of God which alone can establish it. Now, I said in the most distinct manner, that the dispensation is not yet brought to an end, and that it will continue to the end of the period ordained by God, until Christ leaves His Father's throne.

That therefore is not the question; and be sure of it that, if the dispensation were closed, this discussion would not take place. The only question is this: If, on account of the iniquity of man, God has in truth set aside institutions which His authority alone had or could establish, can man, without His authority and power, set them up anew, when it is a question of things which depend either on His authority or on His power? Is it meet for the Church to disown the judgment of God, and without His authority to rebuild what has been destroyed, even though the dispensation still exist?

Thus the kingly power, the Urim and Thummim, and the visible presence of the glory, finally prophecy itself, were

wanting to the Jews after their return from the captivity. Did the Jews pretend to be able to re-establish them? We well know that they did not. Nevertheless, the dispensation was not definitively abolished.

And now it will be understood to what I apply the word “antinomianism”; it is when, on account of the authority of a law or an institution, regarded as a rule established by God, one seeks to destroy the consequences of man’s responsibility, when man has failed in the obedience due to the law, or corrupted an institution which was entrusted to him. The kingly power amongst the Jews, the Lord’s supper amongst Christians, are institutions of God; but they are things entrusted to man; both have been corrupted: the one has been abolished among the Jews; the other has not been abolished amongst Christians. He who would have pretended to set up again the kingly power among the Jews would have fought against God; he who purges the Supper from the corruptions which man has introduced uses it with blessing.

Now I say that the Church has failed in faithfulness. Corruption has come in; many things have been lost; the Church is responsible for it. There are things which it can still enjoy, and there are others which it cannot re-establish. It is admitted that tongues, miracles, inspired prophecy, apostles, gifts of healing, and many other things perhaps, are lost to the Church. The institution of elders had been corrupted in the hands of men; looking at it from my opponents’ point of view, it had been transformed into the seat of the deepest corruption which has ever existed, and of the most awful tyranny of which the world has ever borne the yoke. By mixing ministry with it, it has become the clergy, hierarchy.

Now, not in order to establish the rule of the institution on paper, but in order to invest persons with the possession of this authority which should rest in the institution, there must be some source for this authority, some persons who, according to the institution of God, according to the rule which subsists in the word, are authorized to establish them. For example, there were none at Geneva; they established some. Do I pretend that the law, the rule of the institution, no longer exists? Just the contrary. I take the rule of the institution, a rule given in the New Testament, and I find that, according to this rule there was a source of authority, on which the whole force of the institution depended. This source is wanting now. It is then said to me, The rule, the law, is there. I know full well that it is there; that is why I reject your so-called elders, because they are set up in open opposition to the rule given by the word.

I am told that we are agreed as to the fact that certain things have been lost among the Jews; and others in the Christian dispensation. Well: the existence of the law of an institution does not therefore imply the existence of the institution223 nor the possibility of its re-establishment. It is added “But the objection does not touch the churches; they never had the least pretension to create apostles; the word does not command them to do so.” Now, first of all, Matthias was made an apostle; and, secondly, the word does not command the Church to make elders either.

Throughout the New Testament it is proved that there were apostles. The word proves that there were elders; but it also proves that the churches had not the power to make them, for the institution is expressly based on apostolic authority, and instead of commanding the

churches to appoint any, the apostle sent Titus to establish them; a clear evidence that he did not commit this task to the churches. Such is the immutable rule of the institution, the law which cannot be corrupted, which, thanks be to God, does not change, and which you have violated—you that pretend on your own authority so to act the apostle, and the deputies of the apostles, as to invite Christians who hardly dared to do so to arrogate this right-to themselves, in order to spare yourselves an act which, if directly done in your own names, would have rendered apparent your incapacity and want of power to do. Now in order to strengthen us against the irrefragable proofs that the thing is positively contrary to the rule of the institution we are told “It was therefore needful that the apostles should give institutions to the Church, which might go on after them and without them. It appears to us that, had they not done this, they would have failed in their mission.” Happily you are not in God’s place to judge them, although it would seem you think yourselves competent to do so.

Allow me to tell you that the Church, which went on badly enough with them, has gone on very badly without them, and that the institutions which they gave to the Church have not gone on without them, unless you call the horrors of papacy the progress of the apostolical institutions.

The endeavour is made to persuade us, in the face of the Church’s history, that the apostles necessarily gave institutions which should go on without them. Is it possible to imagine such arguments as these? Poor apostles! According to what the elders of the Evangelical Church at Geneva say, they thoroughly

failed in their mission. At least they had not the pretensions of these gentlemen!

The apostle foresees, with tears, the invasion of the enemy, when the special power with which the Lord had endowed him should be withdrawn. He foretells that there would be an apostasy; and if I am to believe Mons. Gaussen (I do not know if he is one of the elders), that which calls itself the Church will be spued out of Christ's mouth. I do not know whether at that time the institutions will have gone on without the apostle, although they may have been re-established in all their vigour by the Evangelical Church at Geneva.

Hence, therefore, the use of the word law is only a wretched sophism, because a man in whom an institution is realized is not a law; and not only is a law necessary to establish a man in that position with the authority of God, but also the authority for doing so must be vested somewhere, otherwise it is not with the authority of God, unless it be a divine mission which is legitimate itself by its own power, as that of the prophet; but there is no occasion for a nomination.

No; by wearying the patience of God with his sin, man can "not" reduce Him to the incapacity of using His laws. The execution of the just judgment of God is not want of power. When I said "He can no longer make use of them," it is only the expression of the feeling contained in the words "until there was no longer a remedy." Sin has reached such a point that God can no longer bear with it. Is this want of power? No, it is holiness. Such an argument is really not worthy of an answer. Can God use fallen Adam, such as he is, for the kingdom of His glory? Is it imputing to God a want of

power to say that it is impossible? Does the apostle accuse God of powerlessness, when He says that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and that God has introduced something better in the Second Adam?

Corruption is not a law of God. Man, under the law of innocence, was an institution of God; corruption has come in; the institution is marred, corrupted, ruined; it has not been immediately abolished by God, but it has not been re-established: God has introduced something better. Can there be anything plainer or more evident? Well, that is the law of man, one may say, of every creature placed under his responsibility, without being sustained by direct power from God. God was pleased to shew this under every form, without law, under law, under promises, in the priesthood, in the kingly power, in the presentation of His Son to the husbandmen. The institutions were according to God; man has always failed in them, and, save that they are to be made good in Christ, the institutions, as ordained of God, have been set aside one after the other. The weakness of man, of the creature, has been proved. I do not believe that the elders of Geneva form any exception.

But to say that “the dispensations are not responsible for the whole of men’s actings with regard to them” is to say, if the phrase has any meaning at all, that even when men have failed, to whatever degree it may be, with regard to the institutions under which God has placed them, their sin will be no reason for God to put an end to the dispensation which receives its form from those institutions. And I say that such a system is iniquitous, antinomian, and unscriptural.

There is another idea which I wish to take up, weary though I be of this controversy. “The written word now designates them [the elders] by making known to the churches the brethren who are fit for these offices.” First, it was not to the churches that the apostle made them known, but to those who were employed by him to establish these brethren in the bosom of the churches which were not competent to do it. But this is not all.

If the word pointed them out then, there was no need of Timothy or Titus. And if it be the word that designates them, in this case all those who have these qualifications are designated by the word. Every man who is blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous, one that “ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity”; all persons who have these qualities are designated; and, the word having designated them, there is no election, there is no nomination, that is to say, designation. The system of choosing of elders falls by this very fact. All those who are such are nominated with the same authority as if an apostle had set them apart. Now, if this be the case, the thing is done, and the brethren whom you call Plymouthists, who accept them without choosing them, are nearer the truth.

If the apostle had appointed elders, would it have been the Church’s place to choose them afterwards, to nominate them, or do whatever it might be, except to obey? Clearly not. If the word designates them, establishes them with the same authority that the apostles did, you have nothing to do, except that the apostles did something that the word does not do, and

which you pretend to do with apostolic sagacity and authority. Paul, Barnabas, and Titus did something besides pointing out the desirable qualifications. They never designated the elders to the churches in an abstract manner by qualifications. Such a designation has never been addressed to a church.

I said that “the New Testament dispensation will, without any doubt, accomplish the period assigned to it.” We are agreed that the period is not accomplished. As a deduction, it is said “Consequently the New Testament and the institutions which concern the formation, government, and service of the churches exist in full force.” Why so? The period of the Jewish dispensation was not fulfilled before the coming of the Saviour. Were all the institutions of God in full force? The kingly power, prophecy, Urim and Thummim, the presence of God in the temple, the ark with the mercy-seat, on which was put the blood which maintained the relationship of God with Israel, was all that in full force? But I shall be told, The things were found in scripture. Granted; but what does that prove, except that your reasoning from beginning to end is only a miserable sophism, which seeks to destroy the responsibility of man, and the consequences which flow from the fact of his having failed as to it. These things of which I have just spoken were lost, lost on account of the sins of men, although the end of the dispensation had not yet come. Man could not set them up again. The fact that they were to be found in the scriptures was only the humiliating proof that the Jews had lost them through their sins.

I almost forgot what is said on the following words of my pamphlet: “In order not to offend them, He submitted to

what they required." My opponents shew much holy indignation against such doctrines. They say "In fact, that Jesus submitted to the law, because the Jews required it of Hin, is rationalistic doctrine." I was about to answer that I had said nothing about the law—"submitting to the law" is not to be found in my pamphlet, and that it is not the subject treated of in the part whence my words are quoted! But alas! on closer examination one finds that this is but another instance of false quotation. "He submitted to all that was required of Him" is placed between inverted commas; but in my pamphlet there is only "He submitted to that which was required of Him" —a very essential difference, because it is a question of a particular point, and not of the law; whereas, if it is said He submitted to "all" that was required of Him, that word "all" may be looked upon as including the law and all else besides. If the trouble is taken to read my pamphlet, "Observations on the Tract entitled 'Plymouthism,'" it will be seen, that it is not at all a question of the obligation of the law, but of this particular point, that there was no longer either ark, or Urim and Thummim; that the presence of God was no longer in the temple; that the temple was empty, and that "the body of the Lord was the true temple." In order not to offend them He submitted to that which was required of Him, that is to say, regarding respect for the temple as if God were there. If one has ever so little knowledge of the word, one must know to what this alludes. They demanded the tribute-money for the expenses of the temple; and the Lord, while He testified that He and His disciples, as being the children of the great King, were not really bound to pay, answers Peter, "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that

first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee," Matt. 17:27. He displays Himself as disposing of creation according to His good pleasure, and thus shews that His body is the true temple, although He, the Son, deigns to associate His disciples with Himself as children of the great King. Whilst manifesting His divine glory He submitted, in order not to offend them, to what was required of Him. But what a task it is to contend with opponents who are so ignorant that they discover rationalism in the Lord's own words, not knowing, perhaps, that He pronounced them! Moreover, as I have said, the point was not submission to the law, nor submission to all that was required of Him, but of the condition of the temple, deprived of the presence of Jehovah, whilst the body of Jesus was the true temple of God.

Again, they pretend that I say that the Christian dispensation or new covenant is rejected. This is not the place for discussing the extent of the new covenant, nor its relations to the Christian dispensation; but I do not believe that the new covenant is set aside, because the Jews will be brought in again by means of this covenant, when the Church is in heaven. If the covenant were set aside, the dispensation founded on it would necessarily fall at the same time; but God, by taking up the Church to heaven and by rejecting the order of things which has existed in connection with it on the earth, can deal with Israel on the ground of the covenant founded on the blood of Christ. The Church, properly speaking, the body of Christ, is not a dispensation, it does not belong to the earth; but there is an order of things connected with it during its sojourning here below—an order of things

whose existence is linked with the Church's responsibility. The dispensation of the new covenant is, properly speaking, the millennium on the earth, as it is easy to be convinced of by reading the prophecy of Jeremiah who speaks of it. But, the blood of the covenant having been shed, Christians enjoy the practical and spiritual effect of what has been done (and this even in a more excellent way than that in which the Jews will enjoy it in the age to come), although the Jews as a nation have refused to avail themselves of it.

But if, according to the general language of the Christian world, we call the present order of things a dispensation or economy, it has not yet been rejected, as I have already very plainly said. It does not follow from this that Christians have not lost some things which they cannot again re-establish, nor that they are not guilty, and already, in the main, guilty of that which, in spite of the longsuffering of God, will bring down judgment and cause Christ to spue the whole system from His mouth.

Let us now see how the question is presented through the use of the word "law" to the exclusion of "covenant and institutions." It is said, "God punishes the sinner, but He does not abrogate His laws on account of sins." And who imagines such a thing, if it is a question of abrogating the authority of the law? But God certainly has set the whole covenant of the law aside, and the whole system from beginning to end, viewed as being the principle of God's relationship with man on the earth. No one would dare deny it, not even an unbelieving Jew, who suffers the consequence of it. He expects something better—the coming of the Messiah. To pretend that the change has not taken place is folly, it is the denial of Christianity: to present the thing as if it

meant that God abrogates His laws because man has sinned is a wretched quibble, worthy of the cause it is employed to uphold.

Then it is said that, since I acknowledge that the New Testament dispensation is not yet at an end, and that the new covenant consequently still continues, “it is a strict duty of obedience for the churches, to return to what it teaches, no doubt according to the measure of what is possible.” Certainly, as far as regards my walk in the position in which God has placed me; but the question is quite different here. This is it: Am I placed by God in a position which authorizes me to establish elders? and where ought I to establish them? In every town? This is truly what Titus had to do. And you, the Evangelical Church at Geneva, you do not pretend to do so outside of Geneva. You are not therefore in the position to which these instructions are addressed. This is what I deny—your authority. Your teaching here is, however, very harmless. Obedience, according to the measure of what is possible, you say, is a duty; and you affirm that it is possible to fulfil it. Be assured that Mr. Darby does not at all deny that it is possible to fulfil duty, that is, according to the measure of what is possible. On the contrary, he is struck with the wisdom of your remarks. There is only one thing you have forgotten here, namely, that the word possible is a relative word, and that it answers to the power of him who acts. It is your power that I question. One may have the pretension to appoint elders; this is certainly according to the measure of what is possible. But the question is this: When you have appointed them, can it be said, “The Church of God,” “over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers”? If

you cannot say that, what is your appointing worth? What I doubt is your power to do it.

You say you do not pretend to re-establish that which may have been lost through your fault; but time was when you had no elders, and now you have some. But this is not all: there is the deplorable indifference to a loss which ought to awaken the conscience of every true Christian. You say, “But it is not a question of knowing whether God withdrew blessings from Israel on account of their sins; that which it is important to ascertain is, whether the Mosaic dispensation continued until the coming of Christ.” And, again, “No doubt God, in consequence of the idolatry and sin of Israel, withdrew His glory, as well as the ark, the Urim and Thummim.” Although He had withdrawn all these, you say, nevertheless, “If, therefore, the ordinances of the law were maintained after the captivity; if Israel were called to serve God by their means…” But is it possible to treat such a subject with such levity? No doubt, God bore with Israel; but He had from the time of Isaiah made the heart of this people fat. The glory with which all the ordinances were connected had been withdrawn; the ark, over which was the mercy-seat, by means of which Israel as a people were reconciled; the Urim and Thummim, by which the high priest knew the will of God when he presented himself before Him—all these had been withdrawn. And you dare to say that it is not a question of that? Is it not a question of knowing whether the glory, that is to say the presence of God, was gone from this people? This was perhaps neither an ordinance nor a law, but did it not change anything? Is it not important to ascertain whether that glory was there or not? But was not the act of putting the blood on the

mercy-seat an ordinance, the most important ordinance of all? Was that maintained? The temple was empty—deprived of the presence of God. If the pretension to maintain that ordinance had existed, it would, in fact, have been like the appointment of elders, for God was not there. But with my opponents, it is not a question of that. What it is important to ascertain is that the dispensation is not at an end. And when the high priest enquired of God by Urim and Thummim, was not this an ordinance of the law? Was it maintained after the captivity? The word in Ezra and Nehemiah proves that these mysterious signs were wanting.

All that gave any value to the priesthood of Aaron, the presence of Jehovah to whom he drew near; the ark, which was the throne of God, and the sprinkhng of the blood (on the great day of atonement) by which propitiation was made; the Urim and Thummim by which the high priest received the answer of God for the people, and directed all their affairs— all this was gone. But it is not a question of these! the point is to know whether the priesthood of Aaron was abolished after the captivity.

The case is not the same; for if the priesthood no longer existed according to God’s order, Israel could not have reestablished one; and that is what you pretend to do with regard to elders. Moreover, your remarks throw great light on your thoughts. If you can maintain the form and the official importance of your position without the presence of God, without any of those things which give it force, until the end of the dispensation, you will be satisfied. That the priesthood of Aaron be without the glory in the temple, without the true mercy-seat and without means of atonement, without Urim and

Thummim, or the knowledge of God's thoughts, is all the same, according to you; it has its official place: this is what it is important to shew. Remember, gentlemen, that it was this which brought in the ruin of Israel. The tree was dry, the house was empty: what had God to do then? But you come off nearly as badly about the beginning of a dispensation as you do about its end.

You say, "The apostles did not institute a central power in the Church." This is perfectly true, and the reason of it is very simple: they were themselves that power. And when the twelve at Jerusalem ceased to be such, Paul was it. He established elders in every city, he sent Titus to act, because he was invested with central power in the Church assembled from among the Gentiles, invested with this power by Christ Himself. Then, after all, you are in the beaten path from which the Spirit of God is bringing out Christians. The thing becomes clear enough. There is nothing like searching into truth. You long for independent churches. This is the whole secret of the matter. You say, "They, on the contrary, constituted churches independent one of the other." This is your whole affair. You cannot deny that the apostles and Paul, in the sphere which God assigned him, exercised a power over all the churches (that is to say, a central power); you cannot deny that the Church was one, that the gifts were members of the one body, and were exercised in the unity of this body manifested on the earth. The churches, whilst exercising their discipline each in its own locality, exercised it in the name of the universal Church, and there it was valid. Gifts were placed in the Church, not in the churches. The whole body was but one. But that which you uphold is shewn to be only the fancy to have independent

churches. He who has drunk old wine does not immediately desire new, “for he says, the old is better.” The unity of the body is set aside.

You say, Governmental authority resides in the scriptures. A singular seat of executive power! Laws are found there; but governmental authority is not a law, although it may act according to law.

Who replaces the apostles? According to you, all the faithful in each locality replace this central power, which certainly did exist, and to which those who were of God listened. But in vain do I seek for some proof that such authority was entrusted to all. You do not and cannot say now that Christian assemblies have the right to choose them, and that it is their duty to do so, but you do not quote any passage.

“They rightly believe that, in so acting, they do a work pleasing to the Lord.” This is all you have to say. And then you proclaim, “We have just seen that the churches have the necessary authority for designating their elders and their deacons.” But you must feel the ground slipping from under your feet, and that the whole building is ready to crumble. You wish to prop it up. You say, “The apostles made use of the form of election, they chose Matthias.” Is this a proof that we can choose apostles? You overthrow all your arguments by this example, for were this example worth anything it would rightly authorize you to choose apostles; but things did not happen thus. The qualifications were plainly pointed out. It must be men who had followed the Lord from the baptism of John; then they set two before the Lord (estesan duo) who answered, as one must believe, to those conditions.. But they did not dare to choose

between the two, and they drew lots. You have altered the sense of the word by saying, “They chose Matthias,” and “This presentation was then confirmed.” They say, “Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship.” How dare any one thus alter the word? But all is well, so long as one can maintain one’s position.

Deacons were elected: we have spoken of them elsewhere. It was a temporal matter, with which the apostles refused to burden themselves; just as Paul, in another case, wishing to remain free from all reproach, refused to take the brethren’s money, unless some one from amongst themselves were chosen to take charge of it with him. But what has this to do with the overseers of the Church, who are the servants of God? The deacons were servants of the Church, as Phoebe, servant of the church at Cenchrea. They chose deputies at Antioch. You must be much at a loss for quotations, if you are obliged to quote this passage. These were occasional deputies in order to put a stop to a tumult in the Church, and this has not the slightest connection with the permanent authorities established over the Church, and there is not a word said of their nomination. They decided that Paul and Barnabas, who had argued in vain against the judaizing Christians, should go up, and others with them, to Jerusalem. How were they appointed? There is a perfect silence on this point. I think it very probable that they were chosen by general consent, since they were their deputies. There is not a word which says that they were appointed by lot.

Then you say that the end of 2 Corinthians 8 “shews us also brethren, who laboured for the glory of the Lord,

and who were deputies of the Church, being elected and chosen by them." This is a singular paraphrase. How embarrassing when one attempts to prove a thing which does not exist! They laboured for the glory of the Lord. Now, I ask you, for what work were they chosen by the churches? You will tell me, We do not say. Well, neither does the word. And what then do you wish to teach by introducing it? The word is very simple, is it not? It is a pity that you are not so. Doubtless, this cannot be, with the system which you have adopted rightly, as it appears, but without the word. The word says that one at least of these excellent brethren was chosen by the churches for the administration of the money sent to Jerusalem, the apostle having refused to take charge of it unless there was one with him, so as to avoid the possibility of a single reproach. And what has all this to do with the choice of the regular authorities of the Church, with reference to whom we have passages which you have not quoted at all?

Why, without multiplying questions, did you not draw attention to Acts 14? It is spoken there of the nomination of elders, and this is not the case in any of the passages which you have quoted. Why not mention the passage in the Epistle to Titus, where the apostle clearly speaks of this? Would it not have been more natural, when it is a question of elders, to quote passages which speak of them, than to multiply quotations from passages which do not speak of them? You dared not do it. These passages say exactly the contrary of what you wish to persuade us. There were churches in Asia Minor: the apostles chose for them. There were churches in Crete: Paul sent Titus to establish some in them.

You tell us that ecclesiastical history leaves no doubt on this point. I do not allow that ecclesiastical history is any authority, but whatever the value of its testimony may be, it very plainly contradicts what you say.

Here are the words of Clement, or rather of the whole Church at Rome, in whose name he writes. There were divisions at Corinth, on the subject of elders. The Church had set aside certain elders, as claiming the right to do so according to the principles which I contest. In his Epistle, 1 Corinthians 4:2," The apostles evangelized us on behalf of our Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus the Christ did so on behalf of God. The Christ was sent on behalf of God, and the apostles on behalf of Christ. The two things occurred regularly therefore according to the will of God. Having therefore preached through divers places, in the country, and in the towns, they established their first-fruits to be overseers and deacons among those who should believe, having, by the Holy Spirit, found them worthy. And there is nothing new in this." Then he quotes the choice of Aaron by the direct testimony of God in what happened to his rod. "And our apostles knew, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be disputations with regard to the name of the episcopacy. Therefore, having received a perfect fore-knowledge of this, they established those of whom we have previously spoken and then gave a legal224 order of succession, how that, when they fell asleep, other approved persons might receive their ministry. Those therefore, who were established by them, or afterwards by other eminent (renowned) men, the whole Church approving them… these we esteem wrongfully deprived of their ministry." Here we have the question expressly treated by one who was a companion of the apostle, who

acted in the matter, who was a successor of the apostle, as far as anyone could be such, and one who is, in every way, the highest possible authority on such a subject. What he says to be the history of the matter is confirmed by the whole Church of Rome, and he declares that the apostle had foreseen the difficulty, and that, when the Corinthians were pretending to exercise the very authority claimed by the Evangelical Church at Geneva. He declares that the apostle had established elders and a form of succession; then that other men of repute had established them, the whole Church being satisfied with it. It is impossible to have anything clearer or more positive, in ecclesiastical history, to contradict the assertion of my opponents.

I examine Mosheim.225 He tells me that it is scarcely to be doubted, if one considers the prudence and moderation shewn by the apostles in appointing an apostle, and then the seven, that the elders of the primitive Church at Jerusalem were elected by suffrages of the faithful. Then he says that when an elder was needed, the body of elders recommended one or two persons to the assembly; and in a note he says that Titus 1:5 proves nothing against it: Titus might have consulted, and doubtless did in reality consult, the wishes of the people. This may be so. It is, however, quite another thing from a history which, as you wish to persuade us, leaves no doubt that they acted by way of election. And Mosheim is so far from thinking of an election, that he makes use of what he believes to have occurred in order to justify what he calls the right of presentation, as not being repugnant to the practice of the primitive Church, adding that a similar right was always acknowledged as belonging to the bishops and

the collective body of elders, and he alleges it to the end that he may shew that popular election is thoroughly bad. He says, nevertheless, that the people might refuse those presented.

Neander says that one may conclude, from the choice of deacons and deputies, that the Church chose other functionaries also, but that, where the apostles had not confidence in the churches, they gave the important office of elder to those who were fitted for it. Then he quotes Clement, to shew that it might be the custom for the elders to present a successor in case of death. Where the consent of the Church was not a mere form, this might be very useful. The fact is, if one takes history, the only thing which cannot be doubted is that one must be an episcopalian. The reader who is desirous of studying this subject may consult Cyprian's letter, 67 or 68, where he seeks to attach the utmost importance to the part which the people took in the election of a bishop, in order to make use of it against the authority of the Pope, against whose acts he was striving. As to the priests, it appears from letter 40, that he ordained them himself alone, and that he then informed the people of it, but this was in a time of persecution. In other letters he excuses himself for so doing, on account of that, saying that the testimony of the people was no longer necessary when God had given His, inasmuch as he whom he had ordained had confessed the Lord at the peril of his life, but that, when he had entered on his episcopate, he had imposed upon himself as a rule never to do anything without the consent of the clergy and people. So that what you say of history is entirely contradicted by the data with which the old authors

furnish us. At any rate, as regards authority, this has only ecclesiastical authority.

It is a question of commencing the existence of a body of elders. The word and history positively declare that it was the apostles who appointed these, and subsequently eminent men. Clement of Alexandria says that when John returned from Ephesus, he, being invited, went through the neighbourhood inhabited by Gentiles, establishing bishops (say elders), constituting churches, and placing among the clergy every one of those who were indicated by the Holy Spirit (Eusebius 3:23, quoting Clement of Alexandria, “Who is the rich man that shall be saved?”). That elders were elected by the faithful is certainly what ecclesiastical history does not state. The idea of presentation (the testimony of the people being received, or, at least, the thing being done in their presence) is what is best established.

Consequently Cyprian makes all the faithful responsible as to this, and tells them that they ought to separate from a bad bishop little by little; this was the cause of a struggle between the two. For a time the people chose them, at least in Italy; blood was shed, and one may say, that there was a civil war. And mark this, it was on the subject of bishops. I know of no testimony which states the election of elders. Certain is it that we have some who relate their appointment differently. The earliest authorities attribute it to the apostles (Clement of Alexandria), or to the apostles and eminent men, all the people consenting to it (Clement of Rome). In the fourth century the people often chose their own bishops, and candidates often canvassed for the office; there were conflicts between the bishops and the people, as in the case of Martin of Tours; or there were factions, as at

Rome, in the case of Symmachus. Between these two epochs, the forms differed according to circumstances, but the episcopacy was established.

I have already said too much about it. I do not at all pretend to possess that kind of learning, but a very little general knowledge suffices to shew that this assertion, with regard to ecclesiastical history, is worth no more than all the others. I believe I have summed up, in an impartial manner, the testimony of ecclesiastical history on the most contested point of all ecclesiastical historical questions. If the learned reader desires to know all the opinions on this subject, he will find them collected in “Bingham’s Ecclesiastical Antiquities,” book 4, chap. 2, with the indication of the books which treat on the subject. This book has been translated into Latin for the benefit of those who do not understand English.

When I am asked where God said that He could not make use of the new covenant to make Himself known to us; the question does not deserve an answer, because my opponents believe, as I do, that God will put an end to the present order of things by the coming of the Son of man in judgment, and that another dispensation will be substituted for it. No one has said that God cannot make use of the new covenant, no one thinks so. But I have yet to learn, why the subsisting of the new covenant obliges me to admit that the Holy Spirit has established the elders of the Evangelical Church at Geneva overseers over the Church of God. This is a pretension of a pretty high nature. They wish to make us believe that, if one of the elders of this body is not acknowledged in his office, the new covenant is done away with! In matter of argument, this is modesty as well as good sense. Moreover, what I have said is, not

that God cannot make use of anything, be it what it may, on account of sin, but that when man has corrupted what God has set up, so that, despite His great patience, He cannot make use of it, He does not restore what has been ruined, but He introduces something better. The whole word bears witness to the accuracy of this remark from Genesis to the Apocalypse. That which is important to all is that the sin, the evil which will bring down judgment, has already come in: God may still have patience, but the judgment of-this evil, which has existed for a long time, does not tarry; and with my whole might, I again beseech the children of God, my brethren, to abjure principles which deprive them of the power and discernment necessary to avoid the trap spread by the enemy, and to assist him according to the testimony of God.

You three times exclaim against my “very awful threats,” “the threats of Mr. Darby,” and “his prophetical and threatening language.” I do not threaten any one; but the pretensions of the elders, or of any adversaries of the truth, will not hinder me from exhorting men, as far as the grace of God enables me, to wait for the Lord, who is going to overturn all that which is established, and to shun all that might obscure the perception of His coming glory, or the hope of His manifestation. People speak of believing in Christ as the only condition for partaking of the promise. Be it so! But ought one to weaken, by this doctrine, the authority and obligation of the word in everything? It is legitimate to add, “if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” May my brethren learn to keep the word of His patience, whilst listening to the sweet promise, “Behold, I come quickly!”

221 Page 10, first edition: page 9 of the second.

222 It must be observed, that the passages which I reproduce in the text as having been altered are not placed in inverted commas. The author says, “It is necessary to transcribe here the passages from ‘Plymouthism,’ in which Mr. Darby’s system is formally expressed.” He immediately, in effect, gives the passages from “Plymouthism,” in which he had presented, in his way, Mr. Darby’s system, introducing most important alterations in it in order to facilitate his arguments. But he avoids the use of inverted commas. And why so? He was conscious of these important alterations: he did not wish to present these passages to the reader’s eye as being quotations. He did not wish, by the use of inverted commas, to draw the reader’s attention to them as if such were their character. But, in fact, they are passages in which he pretends to give the former expression of Mr. Darby’s system, and he expressly says, “It is necessary to transcribe here.” I leave to my reader the task of appreciating all this. It was needful for me to notice this absence of inverted commas, because it might have been said he does not pretend that it is a quotation. But, in that case, what does “transcribe here “mean? I feel assured my reader will sympathize with me in the pain which I feel at being forced to have to do with such a way of acting.

223 In a note to “Qu’est ce qu’on a reconnu?” it says that the word here rendered (p. 29) “instituteur” ought to be “institution.”

224 I translate as well as I can epinome, a word the force of which is disputed. The known use of it is, the act of pasturing, going over a pasturage; but epinomos, signifies legal, a legal form, and I think that the substantive ought to be thus understood. There are

some who pretend it was the succession itself which was indicated; thus Le Clerc. I translate the same as Usher, Fell, Cotelerius, and others.

225 Ecclesiastical History.

A Letter To Count De Gasparin

In Answer to a Question which he puts to me in the “Archives du Christianisme”

You abandon then, sir, as it appears, what lies at the bottom of the controversy, to embarrass your adversary with a question which you think he will find unanswerable. Nothing in fact remains for you to do but that you have nothing more to say on what lies at the bottom of the question. The controversy is exhausted and one sees clearly where the truth lies. This being the case, I assure you, sir, that I trouble myself very little about the success you may have in your effort to shew that I have exposed myself by some inaccurate expression to your attacks against me. I should have preferred co-operating with you, if that had been possible, in some good thing, to meeting you as a volunteer in a controversy of which, for my part, I regret the necessity.

The fact is, sir, you do not understand what lies at the bottom of the truth to which these questions are attached. Nevertheless, I will answer your question. The observations by which you introduce it bear on what God ought or ought not to do. It would be sufficient for me to say that there is very little reverence in this manner of treating the question, and that you, sir, are absolutely incompetent to decide it in putting it thus.

When you say, “Therefore God would have founded and regulated the institution of elders, to suppress it necessarily at the end of thirty years”; these words have no force whatever unless it be this—we cannot suppose that God could have done such a thing. I do not hold

you, sir, capable of saying what God could do. You are not at the height of His thoughts or of His wisdom. I keep to the word, which reveals to me on His part what He has done and what He intends to do.

Besides, there are all sorts of suppositions in your argument. For example, it is essentially founded on this one: That God had formed an economy with the design of causing it to continue such as it was for a very long time. Where do you find this? As a matter of fact, this has not taken place in the very case in question: and you know it, or else you are too ignorant of the facts to occupy yourself with this subject. Since the end of the apostolical century, it is this succession, of which you are afraid, and by which you think I am seduced, which has prevailed. It is a fact which cannot be denied. You do not approve of the episcopal system, you do not believe it to be that which the apostles, which God Himself, established. Now, in that case, the economy has not continued in its normal condition. This therefore is how you must turn your arguments: Either God had no thought of causing the condition of the economy here below to continue such as it was according to the principles on which He founded it; or His designs have been frustrated. Now this latter supposition is false and impossible: consequently, it did not enter into His designs to maintain the economy on the footing on which He had placed it in founding it. I say “your arguments,” for I can assure you I should not allow myself any such.

Your reasoning has an unsound foundation, or rather none at all. You have taken for granted, without any proof, a great general principle, of which the thing you have to demonstrate is only a particular case. That

which you have first to shew is what you assume, namely, that God's designs were to maintain the economy as it was.

You do not succeed better as to the points of the dilemma on one of which you wish to catch me. As regards the accusation of suppressing a portion of scripture, it has nothing to do here. The part of the word which treats of the innocency of man remains absolutely without direct application now, as there is not an innocent man. Has this part lost its value? The argument, in assuming such to be the case with three whole epistles, could have no force whatever. Now I do not in any way admit that such was the case with regard to these epistles. Moreover, it is not a question of the value of institutions, but of the power to ordain other persons as elders with the same authority as the first, so as to be able to say, "The Holy Spirit has ordained you." At all events, the institutions must have preserved their apostolical force, as long as persons nominated by the apostles or by their deputies lived. Now, if God foresaw that, by the malice of men, the true spiritual value of these institutions would be lost at that time, or when the oversight of the apostles should be wanting; and that by remaining silent He avoided maintaining unto them this authority, when the spiritual qualifications which should have made its exercise profitable had ceased, and when consequently it would no longer be wise to invest men with such authority—would there be anything strange, inconsistent, or imprudent in this silence; or would it be profoundly wise? I do not here pretend to affirm that what I suppose was true, but what I have said about it entirely takes away all foundation for your arguments. The fact is, sir, that the decline to which I allude

happened before that time. Why should I suppose that God took care to invest men with the authority which is attached to those who (thus says the apostle) were ordained by the Holy Spirit Himself, when these men should no longer be in the condition to use it according to the wisdom and according to the thought of the Spirit?

You will have it that God had provided for a nomination of elders in the future, and a nomination made with the authority of God Himself, and this you do not prove. Now without this, neither one side nor the other of your dilemma has any force whatever. My natural answer is that there is no such ordinance or arrangement in scripture.

You tell me, “Then God would have founded and established,” etc. I blame such reasoning a priori with regard to the ways of God; but as an argument, I ask if it would be wise to invest man, on the part of God, with a complete authority, with an official authority, who would take advantage of the assertion that the Holy Spirit had conferred it on them—a true assertion in the case which you suppose—when the qualifications which made this authority profitable to the Church should no longer be there?

Your argument supposes that the Church would continue in a state to profit by such an investiture; and that its entire moral condition would render it desirable. Your supposition is in itself untenable. You have no right to attribute these thoughts, this supposition, to Him who alone has authority in this case, who alone can foresee what is about to happen. Besides, facts do not help to support your irreverent argument. You know that the

declension of which I have spoken has taken place; the apostles themselves predicted it, and more than predicted it; for they declared that it had already begun during their lifetime. You cannot reply “this is exactly why the apostle exhorts the elders to watch over the flock!” Quite true, when he could add, “over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers”; but he did not tell them “for this reason fill up the vacancies that occur in your body”; nor “have others chosen by the assembly.” He did say “I commend you to God and to the word of his grace.” Where is the place in which a fresh nomination is presented as the resource of the Church? I could shew you several which send you back to the written word, the contents of which, inasmuch as they are above the fallibility of men, are the rule and resource of the Church in all ages. In a word, you assume the perpetuity of institutions (vested in the persons of those who were to fulfil the functions), with the authority of an appointment coming from God. Without that, there is no need of apostolic succession. Now you have not the authority of the word for the assertion that God intended to perpetuate them in this way. You have, moreover, the fact that they have not continued in that manner.

Allow me, sir, to tell you, without bitterness, that it is you who, I will not say, detract from, but who lay aside, the authority of the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, because you pretend to ordain elders otherwise than the Holy Spirit orders it to be done. This was why it was insisted on at Geneva that, in ordering it to be done so, the word has not said “and not otherwise.”

I have now answered you, in the main, in a more true and sincere manner than if I had only attached a

consequence to your limited question. But I understand, sir, that this is worth nothing in my case. I therefore come in a formal manner to the categorical question, which, however, is a very small one. I said I “believe—not exactly in the impossibility of ordaining elders after the death of the apostles, but—in the incompetency of those who now pretend to do so,” because I did not wish to pronounce on an abstract question, without being sure of the thought of God in His word; nor to accept the version which my opponents made for me, when the practical question was clear as daylight according to this word, namely, that those who have pretended to do so, at Geneva and elsewhere, had no authority for it whatever. Their pretension was contradicted by the word. It always becomes a Christian not to affirm, and especially in the things of God, that for which he has no positive certainty in the word. One is obliged to follow this rule with still greater care, when one is in the presence of adversaries ready to take advantage. You are the proof of this, sir—of the slightest occasion to make objections which might embarrass the simple in the reception of the truth. The only true conclusion is that I have not wished to affirm anything on this point. If you want a more formal answer, I will tell you I do not think it true that it is necessary to be an apostle in order to ordain elders, but I have not pretended to say, whether, or not, the persons individually appointed by the apostle were able to nominate such, after the death of the apostles who confided to them this authority. I have not wished to assert anything about the abstract question of impossibility, nor do anything else than judge what in fact was proposed to me by the word. We were accused of disobeying the word, because we did not submit to their elders at Geneva, and because we

did not nominate any. My answer was, not to say what was impossible after the death of the apostles, but that you have not the authority of the word for what you have done. If one does not think of nominating them, one has no need of apostolic succession. The persons whom you blame have not had the pretension to nominate any. The idea of apostolic succession is a consequence which you deduce from your pretension, linked with the supposition that it was in God's thoughts that the Church should continue in its normal condition, and that He knew that it would be thus. Now it has not thus continued, and your pretension is irreverent and presumptuous.

Notice, sir, that it is not the Epistles to Timothy and Titus which have conferred on these apostolical delegates the authority to establish elders. These inspired letters, given to the Church for all times, remind one of the fact that this authority had been confided to them, so that, for my part, I do not dare to say what was the extent of the power of establishing elders on the part of the apostles. It is by no means impossible that Paul may have sent several delegates. It is possible that he may have commanded them to do so after his death. The word tells us what he did, so far as that is profitable for the Church at all times, and not all that he did—far from it. What I believe therefore is not precisely that it was impossible to ordain elders after the death of the apostles.

To sum up. Your assertion that God would not have founded and established institutions, knowing that they would fail directly, is entirely without foundation. The principle is shewn to be false by the history of man, of the Jews, of the priesthood in Israel, of the kingly power

in this people—by the whole history of the Bible. At the same time this manner of reasoning on your part is a confession that the word is entirely silent with regard to the appointment of elders after the apostolic times, because you are forced to have recourse to an argument, and to allege that God would not have founded else.

Your second point, namely, that it is not a question of man's failure, but of a necessity which is connected with the death of the apostles, is only a denial of the omniprescience of God; since, if God foresaw the spiritual declension, He might very well not make mention of an institution which would invest with a positive and scriptural authority from Himself that which would be in this moral state of declension, although He might have given authority for a nomination as from Him to those who were the suitable instruments of His grace, before the Church had declined. Now this declension is stated in the word. There is an appointment of the first elders in the Gentile churches, but no decree for so doing continuously, so that you are forced to argue on a supposition of what God ought to have done.

In fact, your question is founded on the supposition that one must be an apostle in order to appoint elders. "If it is true that one must be an apostle," etc. Your supposition is still false. Timothy and Titus were not such. It is possible that others were employed to appoint elders. It is not impossible that they were so employed after the death of the apostles.

So that the conclusion we must come to is this, that you are incorrect in what you say; that I have been very

scrupulous not to assert more than the word authorizes me to say; and the necessity of apostolic succession is a dream on your part.

I leave to you, sir, the choice of continuing the discussion, or of remaining silent. The discussion will only make truth more evident, and your silence will only be the proof that you have nothing more to object to what I put forth.

I am your very devoted brother and servant in Christ,

J. N.Darby

Reply To Two Fresh Letters From Count De Gasparin,

Published in the “Archives du Christianisme,”

of December 3RD, 1854, and February 24th, 1855226

I have no hope, sir, that the sense of the misery of the Church generally will be awakened in the hearts of those who participate in your views, nor of seeing them afflicted with the affliction of the people of God. Though God can work everything in individuals, He employs two means in His word for leading us to judge rightly of the condition of His people: the comparison of this condition with that in which He placed them at the first (Isaiah 5), and then the question, how far this people are in a condition to present themselves before God at the time of the manifestation of His glory (Isaiah 6). People set to work to make churches and elders, because they do not trouble themselves about either the one or the other. To weep over Jerusalem, however certain the safety of the elect might be, was the portion of the heart of Christ. Those who are at ease in Zion, to use an expression of the Old Testament, will always scorn the grief of such as feel how far the holy city has departed from her God. After the first manifestation of the power of God in the establishment of His people, at various epochs, those who were led by the Spirit of God were always a weeping people: not from distrust of the faithfulness of God Himself, but overwhelmed by the feeling that is produced by the consciousness of the little response on the part of the faithful to the power and grace of God. Struck with the beauty of His people, seen (as Balaam saw them) with the eyes of God, they walk mournfully at

the sight of their practical condition. A prophet joyful, excepting in the hope of the coming of the Lord, or in the Lord Himself, is not found in the word. I do not touch longer, therefore, on this point; I leave to God, always good, to act in hearts, according to His sovereign grace, to lead them to see the Church and its present condition as He sees them, and to cause them to feel in this respect as His Spirit makes one feel. I shall only occupy myself with what you say. Although grieved and weary with the controversy, I thank you for your articles; you have furnished yet another opportunity for shewing the emptiness of the pretensions which you justify, and the sandy foundation on which you are building. I am glad that you still have courage to broach this subject; you help to make it plain on what errors as to facts, on what mistakes (which I will not qualify for fear of using a hard word), on what arguments, the pretension to do what the apostle did is founded. I will tell you that, if it were not evident to me that the nomination of elders (a novelty which dates back three or four years) is allied with the denial of the weakness in which we are—of the lamentable state of Christians, if it were not a human pretension, a Laodicean pretension in its character, I should not trouble myself about it. If I had anywhere found elders really in operation, I should never have disquieted myself as to the manner of their nomination. Grace and truth, the wonders of the counsels of God, offer me more enjoyment and edification than these human littlenesses, than the questions of deacons and elders, of sad attempts to imitate the outside of the primitive churches, than these official puppets set up by men. I would have left you elders to your liking, provided that you did not weary me with them. But an

immense truth, a whole moral condition, lies at the root of this question.

I set about answering your two articles.

This time it is no longer an asseveration, sir, it is no longer a reply to my letter. Your card-house has fallen, completely fallen; and, thinking that you may still find some buttresses, some props which will give it a little more solidity, you have re-formed it, rebuilt it entirely anew. This is why you have been obliged to say, that one must know how to say the same thing over again. In this respect you are right. For such a work one must certainly know how to do so. I acknowledge, to my cost, the truthfulness of your observation. I have been again obliged to read what I have read and refuted so many times; but some love the creation of their own genius, and you do not weary of yours. But what of other people, sir? I cannot say that I am not tired of them. However, I must take your warning not to be weary. One needs it.

You have one advantage in your subject: you flatter the vanity of men. They can constitute churches. To appoint elders who shall be their own, and not those whom the Holy Ghost has ordained, will only make them dearer to the hearts of those who have created them. It is a small matter that there is little reality in all this. It little matters that it is almost blasphemy to say “the Holy Ghost has ordained them,” that they are poor imitations, almost caricatures: those who have created them will esteem them all the more for this. Elders ordained by the Spirit would have had an authority proper to them, on His behalf, over the flock: the creatures of the flock will raise the importance of those who created them.

But I must reply to your two articles, though I confess that I am almost ashamed of it. It has never before fallen to me to answer such a collection of inconsistencies, such bold assertions so entirely devoid of foundation. One thing gives me some hope that our controversy will not be without fruit: it is that you betray the consciousness of the weakness of what you say. You appeal to the command: you exclaim at the rationalism of your contradicters: but as to the fundamental point of the controversy (and I acknowledge with sincerity and pleasure your candour in this respect), you confess that no other nomination of elders is found in the word than that made by the apostles. Thus it is true you affirm that it is a horrible principle to say, “we cannot do that which they did”; but while you disapprove of this, you thoroughly recognize the fact that the apostles and their delegates alone did it. Farther on I will examine your arguments on this point; I now only state the fact. It is admitted that, according to the word, no one appointed elders except the apostles and their delegates. You say indeed, “In fact nothing is less certain than the ordination of elders and deacons by the hands of the apostles and their delegates alone”; but you add, “because things appear to have happened thus in the two or three circumstances which the New Testament mentions, it does not the least in the world follow that they could not also have been done otherwise.”227 This is to admit that, according to the instruction with which the New Testament furnishes us, the nomination was made by the apostles and their delegates. Hence you say, “We are not the less permitted to imagine that there may perhaps have been room for other installations of elders besides those which are mentioned in the word of God.” Can any one speak more plainly? The word is

clear and precise, but one may imagine something beside what is mentioned in the word. Sure enough: there has been no lack of that. We have a heap of things which have been imagined beside those mentioned in the word. But what have they done with Christianity and with Christendom by these imaginations? Was I not right in thanking you for helping me to put things in their true light, sir? And you define the force of your expressions very plainly. You say, “I have said ‘perhaps’ because I do not pretend to affirm anything beyond that which is written.” To say therefore that there were elders appointed by others than the apostles and their delegates is to affirm more than what is written. Only, if one were to listen to you, what is written is not of so much importance, because that might have been done otherwise than as the word tells us: and to do it otherwise you think presents a sight “at which evangelical faith must shudder.” It is then clearly ascertained that your ordination of elders is founded on this, that perhaps one may do otherwise than what is said in the word, and that very certainly you have done otherwise.

But you give other examples to support your principle that it is right to do otherwise than what is said in the word; you speak of collections, of the founding of churches, and of other cases. You are unfortunate, sir, in the examples by which you seek to uphold liberty to do otherwise than as the word says. The whole reasoning is a mystification, because it is not a question of acts of authority; but I will only take up your examples. You say, “If the New Testament had only spoken to us of baptisms ordered by the apostles.” Now the New Testament has taken good care to shew that such was not the case and

that all the faithful were baptized: it even declares to us that Paul was not sent to baptize, and that he did baptize scarcely any one. That is to say, that the New Testament, when it was necessary and suitable to give this liberty to others, gives proofs that there was full liberty for every Christian to do it, and that it was not a question of apostolic authority; whereas in the case of elders, the thing is formally in the hands of the apostles and their delegates. You add, “If the New Testament had only related to us the preaching of Peter and of Paul, should we conclude that, after the death of the apostles, the preaching of the gospel ought to have ceased?” Why again draw a conclusion, sir? This was more important even than baptism, and the New Testament is quite full of examples, instructions, accounts, testimonies of the approbation of God, with rules within the Church which shew (what the elders and their upholders do not like so much), that all, according to the gift and faith that God had distributed to them, preached the word to the world, and in the assemblies. It was done individually without rules; it was done in the assembly according to rule. On the occasion of the death of Stephen all went everywhere proclaiming the word; and in Acts 11 we read, “and the hand of the Lord was with them and a great number believed.” Paul speaks of the effect of his bonds on his brethren, and rejoices that some preached Christ though with a spirit of envy.

So that we have, in the two cases of baptism and preaching, the proof that, when all was to be free, the Holy Ghost takes special care to prove this liberty undeniably. In that of the elders their ordination is carefully restricted to the apostles and their delegates.

But you present to us the positive cases of collections and the founding of churches. “You are wrong,” you say, “to have recourse to supposition.” Let us see if you are more fortunate with regard to the facts which you allege. “There are certain acts which the New Testament relates as only accomplished by the apostles.” These are, you say, the two mentioned above. “The only collection for the poor, of which it [the New Testament] makes mention, is entrusted to a deputation in which Paul figures.” In which Paul figures! But this means that others were charged with it as well as Paul: they figured in it also.

Was I not right in saying, in the presence of such frivolous reasons, that I was almost ashamed to answer your article? There is so little truth in calling it an apostolical act, that the apostle declares that, when he should arrive, he would send to Jerusalem those whom they should approve of by their letters, or that he would send with letters those who should be approved of; and, if it were meet that he went himself, they should go with him; and in the Second Epistle he declares to us that he wishes that there should be others for this work, so that no man should blame him in money matters (2 Cor. 8:20, 21). In a similar way the twelve refused to occupy themselves with it, because it did not become them to leave the preaching of the word to serve tables. And you see, in the case of collections, an example of the acts that the New Testament relates as accomplished solely by the apostles! If you speak of the collections themselves, the apostle ordered that the faithful should lay by in store their offering every first day of the week, and he adds, in writing to Corinth, “so that there be no gatherings when I come.” This is a singular way of

figuring in the collection, thus to insist on everything being done through pure Christian liberality, and that, in order to that end, all should be done without him that he might not appear in it at all, and to take particular care that others and persons chosen by the churches should take charge of it, so that no one might reproach him with anything, adding that, in case of his going to Jerusalem, they should go with him! He was very willing to be employed in it, because it was for the poor Jews whom the apostles had particularly recommended to him (Gal. 2:10). If to this we add the case of the other apostles (Acts 6) we have a proof of his thesis, perfectly worthy of the logic of Mons. le Comte de Gasparin and of the cause which he defends, namely, that there are some acts which the New Testament relates as accomplished by the apostles alone. The proof of it is that the twelve formally refused to do it as a thing which did not become the apostleship, and Paul takes good care that others should have the charge of it, and that, in the case of his going to Jerusalem, they should go with him; but as to the collection all was to be done without him. It is perfect in point of proof.

But, before coming to the foundation of churches, you present us with a still stronger example, and it is one which has such an admirable application to the subject of which you treat, and to the pretension which you set up, that it would not be possible to find a more just one. “The only letters addressed to the churches, which we find mentioned in the New Testament, are canonical epistles written by the apostles.”228 You say, By what right do we allow ourselves to write to a church? There is, it is true, something more in the nomination of elders —the authority confided to the apostles and by the

apostles to the elders, which was not merely inspiration. Your elders have no authority. But let us leave that. I think in the main that the elders whom you appoint have a value (apart from authority) in comparison with the elders appointed by the apostles, equal to that which your letters to churches have as compared with those of the apostles. That is to say, they, in one case, are divinely ordained; in the other not—they are purely human. As the letters of the apostles are divinely inspired, those of Christians now are certainly not; on the contrary, they are often sad productions. I will say nothing, sir, of the modesty and seriousness of the comparison of your letters with inspired letters, the word of God. I do not pretend to make you feel anything. Your comparison is ingenious and admirably applicable: it presents (leaving out the question of authority) a perfect picture of your work. Your elders, compared with the elders ordained by the apostles, are like your letters, compared with the inspired letters.

You come, thirdly, to the foundation of churches. You tell us, “More than that; the only founding of churches of which the New Testament contains the history, is of those made by the apostles.” Really! You must set to work, sir, to read the New Testament before venturing into controversy about its contents. The church of Samaria was founded by Philip (the deacon), and then the apostles went down to confer the Holy Ghost on the Samaritans. That at Antioch was founded by those who were dispersed abroad at the death of Stephen. Those are the two most important churches after Jerusalem. Antioch, perhaps, was even more important as the starting-point of Paul’s ministry. It was only after the apostles had heard say that Antioch had received

Christianity that they sent Barnabas, who afterwards went to fetch Paul; then they both assembled together with the church. At Damascus we also find disciples, but dare I point out a church to you which, with all its pretensions, has not, after all, the honour, so far as it is an honour, of having been founded by an apostle?* It is the Church of Rome. The apostle Paul, he who proclaimed sovereign grace in all its extent and in all its fulness, only went there as a prisoner, a living picture of the history of this city. Before going there, however, he wrote an epistle. There is not the least appearance of his having founded a church. So that Samaria, Antioch, Rome, are already lost to you; but this is not all. In the Epistle to the Colossians the apostle speaks of those who had never seen his face in the flesh, for whom he prays. It appears that there were several such, and the apostle speaks of it as a very simple thing; but amongst others he mentions Laodicea, where we know from the last verses of the epistle that there was a church. I do not question your having a very human idea of the foundation of a church. But whatever may be the means of accomplishing it, one thing is very certain, that the assertion, that the New Testament only mentions or even contains the account of churches founded by the apostles, has its source solely in a superficial examination of the word, which must destroy all confidence in what you say of its contents.

* In the primitive Church the churches founded by the apostles were carefully distinguished from all others. According to the Catholics it is this which gave so much importance to the Church of Rome. They quote a doubtful enough passage from Irenaeus (we have only a bad Latin translation of this passage, and of the greater

part of the work of this good and pious father), after having spoken of other similar cases as an argument against heretics, he says, “Go to Rome” —propter potiorem principalitatem. Protestants justly allege that it was archen (origin), because the Church of Rome had two apostles, Peter and Paul, as its founders. For my part, the Epistle to the Romans is a proof of the contrary. However that may be, the Christians of the first century would have been astonished to have heard that all the churches were founded by the apostles. It was said that the celebrated church at Alexandria had Mark as its founder. But I do not wish to go beyond the certain proofs which the Bible furnishes. Here is, if you have not already noticed it (and I must suppose so from what you say), that which may be useful to you in your controversies with those who still bear that name.

The result of the examination which we have made of your arguments is, that the cases which you suppose utterly upset your principles; the facts which you allege are no facts at all; and, from your own confession, the elders whom you install have no more value in comparison with the elders whom the apostle ordained, than your letters have compared with those which the apostles wrote by inspiration.

You are quite as well grounded in what you say about my principles and my views as you are with regard to those of the word; but I shall not trouble myself much about it. There are in your article some more points of importance in the controversy which I will take up.

“Note well,” you say, “that it is moreover a question of a ceremony, not of an act of discernment or choice. No

one can pretend that the election of elders pertained exclusively to the apostles or their delegates."

Here again, sir, you betray your consciousness that this is the weak side of all your pretensions—that discernment in order to choose is necessary. But I do not recognize the same simplicity (I will not allow myself one word of reproach) that you shewed when you confessed that you had no proof in" the word of a nomination of elders by the Church.

Why do you suddenly mix deacons and elders together when we are only speaking of elders, with reference to which examples fail you? The deacons (this is the meaning of the word) of tables, of the wants of the poor, of the administration of the funds of the Church. The Church gave money, its servants administered it. The word does not leave any doubt or any uncertainty on this point; it does not confound the offices as you do; it leaves no room for the confusion by which you seek to escape the force of what it says. It shews us those who fulfilled the functions of deacons chosen by the churches; and the apostles desiring that it should be so. It shews us those as elders appointed by the apostle or by his delegates and by none else. In cases where such must occur without his intervention, the apostle took care that it should be done by his delegate. The elders are bishops or overseers, that is to say, authorities in the Church, to guide it, to watch over it, to take care of it; and the authority comes from above, not from below. The deacons are servants, and servants of the Church. It is thus that scripture speaks. There might, be, and there even were, women on whom this title was conferred; whilst all authority in the Church was forbidden to women. It is only by trying to introduce confusion that

you can avoid the perfectly clear force of the word. You say, “No one can pretend that the election of elders and deacons pertained exclusively to the apostles and their delegates.” There is nothing to pretend, sir; one has only to receive what the word says. It says, that in every case those charged with the money-matters were chosen by the churches; and that, in every case where it was a question of elders, they were chosen by the apostles or by delegates of the apostle. In the one case they were servants (diakonoi), in the other overseers of the Church from God.

Now here are the proofs. At Jerusalem there were murmurs with regard to temporal helps; the apostles would not occupy themselves with such matters, and they call upon the Church to choose persons to do it; and this took place (Acts 6). In 1 Corinthians 16:3, persons approved of by the faithful were to take charge of the money derived from the collections. In 2 Corinthians 8 a brother was chosen229 by the churches to carry the money which they sent to Jerusalem; for the apostle, though he might go there, would not take charge of it alone, though ready to share in doing so. That is to say, in temporal and money matters the word shews us that the apostles desired men to be chosen by the churches, who should have charge of them.

In the case of elders, we find the positive declaration that the apostles Barnabas and Paul chose elders for the churches. This occurred not in one church only, but in every church which they had founded in those countries a short time previously. They returned there, partly in order to do it: it was not a natural consequence of their presence; it was not (as you say would now naturally be done in a similar case) the churches which had called

them to their aid; they retraced their steps to visit the churches, and by their own authority they did not install, did not take part in a ceremony, but chose elders for the churches—the word, as we have said, being exactly the same as that which is employed for the choice by the churches of the persons to whom they had entrusted their money. In neither the one case nor the other is it a question of a ceremony, nor of the imposition of hands, but of the choice of him who should fulfil the office—chosen because they had confidence in him for the work to which he was destined. It is precisely that which you said it was not. The faithful were to discern the persons that they wished to have as their messengers and to give them the seal of their approbation (dokimaze). It was not a question of any ceremony, of any imposition of hands; it was precisely a question of choice and discernment, and nothing else. All that you say stands in open contradiction to the meaning and positive and formal declaration of the word. It is impossible to be in more direct and positive opposition to the word than you are in all you say. And how do you seek to elude the force of the positive declaration of the word? “It gives equally detailed directions about the one (deacons) as about the others (bishops); it is, in consequence, quite allowable to believe that election which might be applied to the first, would not become sacrilege with regard to the second.” Allow me to tell you, sir, that it is not permitted to those who take their place as defenders of the word, and accuse others of abandoning it by following rationalistic principles, to treat it with such lightness. It is not lawful to trifle with that which is inspired, and to neglect it for some “perhaps,” and by such frivolous propositions to say that it is not sacrilege to believe what is not found in

it; that which is allowable is to examine the word and to submit to it.

What you quote from 1 Timothy 5:22 demonstrates that, even when it is only the ceremony of laying on of hands which is in question, the reference is certainly to discernment and responsibility. The passage is as simple as your interpretation of it is false. Timothy was not to lay hands hastily on any one. It was therefore a question of discernment on his part, and grave responsibility with regard to the person to whom he gave the sanction of his solemn approval, which shews the very evident meaning of that which follows, namely, that if he did it lightly and the person was unsuitable for this charge, Timothy would have his share in the evil that he might do.

As to that which concerns the imposition of hands by the body of elders, the thing is certain, for the word has said it. I do not in anywise dispute it. I believe it in all its simplicity. The elders laid their hands on Timothy, perhaps at the very time that he received a special gift by the imposition of the apostle’s hands, as we learn (2 Tim. 1:6). That proves—what? Nothing with regard to the subject of which we treat. It has no reference to it at all. Timothy was not a bishop nor an elder of a church: the communication of a gift by the laying on of an apostle’s hands is quite another thing from the nomination of an elder. It is perfectly certain that Paul chose Timothy to be his companion in labour, and that it was not the Church that chose him. My opponent has been deceiving himself by the fact that the word “elder” is found in the passage.

And this leads me to another point (the importance of which will be my excuse for this anticipation) in which the superficial way in which you have read the word, and the lightness, I say it with sorrow, with which you treat serious subjects, are evident. You say, “If a mysterious transmission were effected by the laying on of the apostles’ hands, if this transmission were more than a blessing, more than a prayer, more than an imposition of hands accompanied now by faith in the bosom of a faithful church, it follows that the legitimate episcopacy does not exist outside the regular series of bishops who are connected with the apostles or their delegates; there only could the primitive charisma pass from one to the other,” etc. Then you say, “The gifts, that is to say, the influences,” “fill the offices because they are gifted for that,” “it is granting that the nature of things will take its course.”

The frivolity, confusion, and infidelity which are here mingled together, have, I confess, astonished me. The offices, the gifts, the laying on of the apostles’ hands, by which they even conferred the Holy Ghost, with that (if there was any, which is not said) which ordained elders to their offices; the gifts, with the devotedness and the influences natural to man; all is mingled together with a carelessness and a contempt for the word, which would be sad enough were they not accompanied with a depth of infidelity which throws the confusion itself into the shade.

The difficulty in such confusion is to know on which side to begin. We must ever remember at the same time that the point of the question was a choice of elders and not the laying on of hands; but I follow you on your own grounds.

You say, “If a mysterious transmission were effected by the laying on of the apostles’ hands, if it were more than a blessing, more than a prayer,” etc. But the Holy Ghost was given by the laying on of the hands of the apostles. 230 It is this power that Simon wished to purchase at Samaria. It is that which is given (Acts 19) as a proof of the apostolical power of Paul. He calls Timothy, in the passage already quoted, to exercise the gift which was in him by the laying on of his hands.

There was therefore a mysterious transmission by the imposition of the apostles’ hands; to deny it is nothing else but infidelity with regard to the most explicit declarations of the word. There was a primitive charisma conferred by the apostles, and (outside the sovereign operation of God) conferred by the hands of the apostles alone. If you deny it, sir, your system is easy to be understood, it is infidelity with regard to a principal point of the word. Thus conferred, the gifts were not consecrated to an office. The confusion of offices with gifts and ministry is the source of the clerical system, and one of the principal causes of the sin committed by the Church which has disowned the operation of the Spirit of God.

Do you deny this transmission of the Spirit by the hands of the apostles? Do you deny that they conferred gifts?

You are mistaken with regard to my views on “the legitimate episcopacy.” The whole clerical system depends on the confusion which you make between gifts and offices. The choice of elders has nothing to do with this transmission. Offices were distinct from gifts, although the same person might possess gifts and be invested with an office.

I have quoted positive passages in the word, which exhort us to obey those who devote themselves to the work. You treat the directions of the word as a principle similar to those of Mons. Proudhon,231 and you confound this devotedness with gifts. But the extent of your downright unbelief on this point betrays itself in what you say of gifts. “Gifts, that is to say, influences.” Is that your thought of what gifts are, sir? It is only “that the nature of things will have its course.” When Paul conferred a gift on Timothy by the laying on of hands, did Timothy simply exercise an influence in which the nature of things had its course? Are all the gifts, the charismata of which 1 Corinthians speaks, only influences? Is what Christ, when He ascended up on high, gave to men (Eph. 4), only influences, in which the nature of things has its course, which “no one will ever hinder”?

It is never said in the word that the apostles laid their hands on the elders. This is probable from analogy, but it is never said. The succession could not depend on it according to the word, but the choice of elders is clearly and positively attributed to the apostles, without a word of the laying on of hands which may have accompanied it; you put aside this choice in order to follow your fancy that it is the Anglican system which influences me; you confound offices with transmission of gifts; then you deny all mysterious transmission by laying on of the apostles’ hands, which the word declares in a most distinct manner; and finally, in order to destroy the last trace of the operation of the Holy Spirit, gifts are to you only influences in which the nature of things will have its course.

I repeat, sir, that the confusion would be pitiable were not the infidelity of so serious a character. I confess to you that I was astonished at it. Let it be known that Mons. de Gasparin does not believe in a mysterious transmission by the imposition of the apostles' hands; next, that gifts are only influences in which the nature of things has its course. It is at all events well that the true root of this system should be laid bare by its own defenders. I have never doubted but that it was practical infidelity with regard to the Holy Spirit, which is one of the principal characters of the infidelity of our days.232 I did not know that it was a formal infidelity boldly avowed on this point.

I have answered all that you have introduced afresh in your two articles to try to re-build your poor house with more solidity.

But you repeat also. I might excuse myself replying to things which I have already answered, but I certainly do not expect that people will again search in my preceding pamphlets to find answers in them to what is in your new essay. I will therefore try, without saying everything over again, to answer briefly anything which might present any difficulty to sincere souls.

With regard to the duration of the institution, and to your accusation that we attribute to God the having set up an organization which was not to last, it is a question of a fact. I know not whether you can ignore that, in fact, this organization ceased after the death of the apostles. If we believe in the interpretation which your party gives of the seven churches of the Apocalypse, this organizaton had already ceased in the time of the apostle John. It is then a question of a fact. The

organization did not last longer than the organizers and their delegates. The facts are hard, merciless. Your theory is that God had absolutely destined it to last and that it was not even the sin of man which caused it to fail. Now, in fact it did not last! That is to say, that in order to uphold your manikins of elders, you say that God destined the thing to continue, but that His design completely failed without even the sin of man being its cause. For I repeat, in truth, this organization did not last longer than the life of the apostles and their successors; which fact is incontestable. That does not astonish us who believe the Bible, for the apostle warns us that after his death evil would invade the Church and that all would corrupt itself. He tells us that already, during his life-time, all those who were in Asia, the part where he had so laboured, had forsaken him, and that in general all sought their own and not the things which are Jesus Christ's. We have seen in the word, that in all ages the analogy of the conduct of men, whatever may have been the ways of God concerning them, strengthens the conclusion which facts and the apostle's testimony force us to accept. The history of Adam, Deuteronomy 32, the history of the priesthood, the history of Solomon, the whole of the biblical history, teaches us that man has never been able to keep the blessings which God has confided to him. As to you who think yourselves capable of "preserving and restoring" what the apostles established, you are indifferent to all this biblical instruction: you can easily do what the apostles did: it is even your duty.

Having again settled this important fact that this organization has not lasted, and weary with repeating what has been said, I will follow you step by step. You

say of me, “First he maintains that the instructions given by Paul to Timothy and Titus on the subject of elders do not contain a command.” I never said this, sir, nor anything like it; your assertion has no foundation whatever in facts.

All that the apostle said to Timothy or Titus has the force of a command, since it is the direction given by the Spirit of God. What you say is entirely false.

I did not say that what is said in the letters to Timothy and Titus does not contain a command, but that in the whole Bible there is not this command, namely, a command to make elders—that there is nowhere a general command to ordain them. You allege that there is a general command, which consequently concerns you, and obliges every Christian to ordain them, so that they are disobedient if they do not do so. This is what I deny—not that what is said to Timothy has.not the force of command, but—that there is such a command to us in what is said there and elsewhere. I say again: Let us re-establish the facts.

As to history, we have the fact that the apostles, not incidentally, not invited on account of their wisdom and their gifts, but led by the Spirit of God, of their own act, return to the churches which they had founded and choose (this is the word) elders for them; and that with deliberate intent the apostle Paul left Titus in Crete to establish them (not incidentally, not by private invitation, but of his own act) in every town, as he himself had done in Asia Minor.

Next, we have several epistles addressed to the churches which treat of all the subjects of interest to Christians, which speak with special detail of the

internal order of a church where the need of superintendence was painfully felt; but never a word, an insinuation, a supposition, that churches themselves had to do with the ordination of elders; they were to be in submission to their spiritual guides; but that they were to appoint them, or to ordain them, does not for an instant enter into the thought of the Spirit. On the other hand we have quite confidential epistles to the delegates of the apostle, one of which is addressed to him whom he had left at Crete expressly to establish elders, and in which directions with regard to the proper qualifications for this office abound. And permit me, sir, to tell you here that, when you say that it is a question of a ceremony, not of choice and discernment, you contradict the meaning of the passage. The apostle does not detail all the qualifications necessary to a bishop for a ceremony, but in order that choice may be made with discernment. When it is said “Lay hands suddenly on no man,” it is a matter of discernment, of choice, and not a simple ceremony. I confess that I find it wearisome to reply to such arguments— I am wrong—to such assertions, which one grain of common sense suffices to condemn. The historical facts then, which are clear and positive, the complete silence maintained in the epistles to the churches on this subject, the large development on this point given in the confidential letters addressed by the apostle to his delegates, to one of whom the establishment of elders was specially confided, all this demonstrates clearly enough and incontestably what has in fact taken place, and the thought of the Spirit in this respect. The apostle chose, or his delegates chose in his stead, it is to these that the Spirit confides all the necessary instructions for doing it rightly and never to the churches.

What is the reply made to these positive facts? to these most clear precepts? A sentence is taken in the confidential letter to Timothy, in which it says, after having spoken of several points, “These things write I unto thee … that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God.” This is said to be a command for all Christians to ordain elders. The apostle had left Timothy at Ephesus to watch over the church during his absence and particularly with regard to doctrine. He hoped to return soon, but he desired that Timothy should be instructed so as to know how to act suitably during his absence. He speaks of the doctrine of grace in contrast with law; then, this grace being addressed to all, how they ought to pray for all; that men were to do so in such and such a manner; that women, on their part, were to pursue such and such a course of conduct. Then he says, “If a man desire the office of a bishop,” he must have such and such qualifications, his wife must be such and such; so with the deacons; and at the end of all this he says, “I tell thee these things that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself.” Here is all that can be found in the way of command, positive command, to all Christians to choose for themselves elders in spite of all that is found in the word. A pope (and the apostle had the authority which the pope assumes) writes to a bishop to point out what are the qualifications necessary for a priest, and, as he watches over the whole Church, he instructs him in the order to be followed, and finally he says, “I write to thee, bishop, so that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave in the Church” —and this is a command to all the faithful to appoint priests, without bishops or a pope, or any other authority in the Church! But one must have lost common sense to reason

in this manner. And you are conscious of it, sir, for you say after all, “the apostles, who found an institution, impose on us by that very fact the command to preserve or to restore it.” If there were a positive command in the Epistle to Timothy, there would be no need of this remark. Why say “by that very fact,” if it is a universal and positive command to all Christians?

Founding an institution does not necessarily imply a command to restore it, because it is possible for an institution to depend on the authority of the founder, and it may be impossible to restore it. An emperor appoints his son as viceroy, and he sends him instructions with regard to the appointment of magistrates, saying to him, “I write these things to thee that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave in the kingdom”: is it a proof that everyone should make magistrates for himself, each in his little coterie, on his own authority, although the emperor might still be living? How often must one expose the futility of such arguments? You say that the apostle alters his language in saying how one should behave. It is not so. He does not change his language suddenly here; it does not alter at all in the sense which you indicate; he had already used the same terms before, but there is a change which you have not remarked. He speaks of the duties and behaviour to be maintained by ordinary Christians; men were to pray, women were to dress themselves modestly, etc. Now in this case he speaks about the duties of all. I desire that men do so and so, and likewise that the women, etc. But when he comes to the question of bishops, which was not the duty of all, he no longer says a word about the duties of Christians in general with regard to this. Here he suddenly changes his language

and indicates to Timothy alone the necessary qualifications, and the reasons why they were to be required; having previously applied his words to all, because it was a question of the conduct of all, he suddenly changes his language when he begins to speak of bishops, and says not another word of the duty of Christians; but he ends his remark not by saying, “I write so that the faithful, or I wish that the faithful, should know how they ought to behave,” as he had said previously; but “I write that thou mayest know.” There is a change. Before speaking of bishops, he said that he wished that all should act so and so. As soon as he speaks of bishops, he ceases to do so and addresses himself to Timothy personally and individually.

The thing is very simple. When the apostle gives directions to Timothy with reference to the conduct which he should cause Christians to maintain, every Christian will understand that it is a command for himself concerning the conduct that he ought to follow. When he speaks to Timothy as to an authority in the Church of his conduct as such, this is certainly a command, but office and authority are not attributed where they are not possessed. A direction given to a person in an important office for his conduct in that office, is a command like any other, but to apply it to oneself as if it were addressed to one when one has not the office, is an application which is neither just nor modest.

It is a denial of the distinction of ministry. If directions and exhortations are given to those who exercise any ministry whatsoever with reference to their ministry, are the force and authority of the directions denied, because (not having the ministry) they are not applicable to

oneself? or are such exhortations commands which order all to create ministry when it is no longer possessed? The apostle gives directions for the use of tongues and of gifts of interpretation. Is his authority rejected because it is no longer applicable to them? Do those commands oblige you to restore what has been lost, as the Irvingites have pretended to do? The difference lies only in this: one may imitate elders and boast of doing so, whereas the imitation of tongues only gives occasion for ridicule. After all, there have been and there still are more persons carried away by the pretension to the gift of tongues, than by the reappointment of elders. You say, “The rules which the apostle addressed to Corinth being commands for every church, the rules which he addressed to Timothy are also commands for every epoch.” Yes, you feel the weakness of your cause. Why this change of “churches” into epochs? The thing is that the Epistle to Timothy was not addressed to any church. The rules addressed to Corinth concerning tongues are they for every epoch? Yes, you say. I also say Yes, if tongues exist. When there are none, these rules cannot be applied, and this does not affect the authority of the word. The rules given to Timothy with regard to his own behaviour as delegate are applicable to every epoch if there is a Timothy. The rules addressed to Corinth were for every church: be it so. The rules addressed to Timothy were—let us say, without altering anything—for every church: you have not dared to say it. They were in a great measure directions given to a man invested with a special office concerning his behaviour in this office, a light for all, because he was to watch over the conduct of all and so all are referred to in the epistle. But it is not true that the epistle was addressed to all the churches: to affirm

this would be to deny a special ministry, to destroy it in its most important parts. If the letter was not addressed to the churches of that time, and if they could not use it with intelligence, without acknowledging the special position of Timothy, it is the same now. The Church uses these epistles, but it uses them as having been addressed to a Timothy and not directly to the churches themselves.

Your second point is “Then he maintains that these instructions do not organize offices excepting for the duration of the life of the apostles and their delegates.” I have, in fact, answered this assertion. The apostle does not say anything either for or against as to the duration of its organization. He does his duty in the work which God entrusted to him and he leaves the rest to God. As a prophet he announced that it would go on growing worse, and that the mystery was already developing itself. That which he said has been, and still is, being accomplished. What I say is, that the organization has certainly not lasted. You dare not contradict me without giving the lie to the whole of history. The instructions are not occupied with the duration. They give the qualifications suitable to a bishop, nothing else, neither more nor less. What I have said is an incontestable historical fact. God in His wisdom has not spoken in a way to allow Himself to be belied by facts. But, moreover, you think that God has put before us in the word the prospect of a long duration of the Church, for which He should provide an organization. You say it, sir, but the word of God does not speak thus. Quite the contrary. You speak of the whole future of the Church, as if God had proclaimed it, and as if He had prepared everything for a long future on earth. There is nothing of

this. The Church is called on high. The word presents the coming of Jesus as the hope of the Church, and teaches the Church always to expect Him. The thought of the long duration was that of the unfaithful servant, “My lord delayeth his coming”; this is what causes him to unite with the world and to usurp authority over the other servants. The idea on which all your system, all your arguments, are founded, is a guilty one. The Bridegroom has, in truth, delayed His coming; the wise and foolish virgins have surely slept. Perhaps you think that they have done well to sleep.

It has been said to me, in order to shew that the Church had not failed, that there was no occasion to blame them for sleeping. Perhaps you think that the mystery of iniquity has worked without the Church having failed, that all forsook Paul, that all sought their own interests, without its having been sin. I have already said, sir, that I have no pretension to make you fed anything whatever with regard to this. But here is what is certain. Such has been the conduct of the Church. The word of God does not speak of a long future for the Church, but of the unfaithfulness of the servant who expected it. The organization established by the apostle did not last more than thirty years after his death. He foresaw and predicted the general ruin of his work as a testimony set up on the earth; he even felt it before his death. I leave it for you and everyone to say if there has been sin in what has taken place.

In your second article you give the following expression to the views which you combat. “What was practised by the apostle cannot be carried on by simple Christians.” Then there is a long series of declamation and rhetoric upon it, the clatter of which seeks to hide weakness. You

waste your trouble on any reasonable person. Marriage was practised by the apostles, as were charity, preaching, and manual labour. The question is entirely a different one. You have yourself in principle made the distinction in the apostolic work which every sensible man must make; but you have not known how to allow it in your rhetoric. You have distinguished between what the apostles did according to their apostolical authority and what they did as any other Christian, common to all by the grace of God. The question for us is to know whether the choice and nomination of elders was not a part of what they did in virtue of their apostolical office. It is really a want of common sense to say that our not being able to imitate them, destroys in its essence the idea of command. The notion of command is effaced before this theory. The theory is a theory of your own imagination; but even if it were not, it has nothing to do with the commands of the apostles. I may obey their commands by my acts without being able to imitate theirs. Does obeying a king or emperor mean that one can imitate his actions? But I am wrong in replying to such high-flown words, the more so as I am agreed on the ground of the distinction which you make. But when you come to its application, you go completely wrong as usual. You point out as exclusively apostolical, “as a part of the apostolical authority which is connected with their qualifications alone, with the unique fact of the apostleship, miracles, the direct testimony of Jesus Christ, the fact of their writing theopneustically the canonical books, of their founding institutions, and giving orders which are the commands of the Lord.” These two last acts are the only ones exclusively connected with the fact of the apostleship. Others did miracles. There were at least five hundred other direct

witnesses of Jesus Christ. Mark and Luke wrote theopneustically without being apostles; perhaps James and Jude, who left us inspired epistles, were not. There is everywhere the same thoughtless assertion, the same ignorance of facts and of scriptural principles. In the second category of the acts which you enumerate as common to the apostles and other Christians, you say amongst other things the necessary principles of good order and organization. What part of apostolical or other action is a necessary principle? A principle is not activity —is not an act connected with an office. But what is the difference between founding institutions and an organization? The first act is exclusively connected with the apostleship; he has the principle of organization in common with every Christian. But when they founded institutions, the principle of organization received a form which has authority; for their directions are commands. We have no need of other organization than what they left us. The point is to make, to act, to ordain with authority; and you have not touched upon this only question which we have to decide. When one wishes to act on the principle or organization established by the apostles; when one seeks for the institutions which they founded and which have disappeared for nearly eighteen centuries; when this part of the working is wanting, which re-establishes the institutions, which chooses suitable persons, which installs them in their office with the authority of God, so that it can be said “The Holy Ghost has made you bishops”; when the point is to know if conferring authority on the behalf of God was not an act which was connected solely with the office of apostle, that is to say, that on the one and only question not one word is to be found in what you say here. You have nothing to say on the only question of which we

treat. We do not speak vaguely of a necessary principle of organization. The elders had authority in the Church, other Christians were to submit to them. Whence had they this authority? From whom did they hold it? It was of such a character and its source so sure, that one could say “The Holy Ghost has made you.” Did they hold this authority immediately from the apostles and their delegates, and in this way directly from Christ, who had given authority to the apostles to act, or did they hold it from the mass of the faithful, or from each little voluntary assembly? The word shews us that their authority was derived from the apostles, that they were chosen either by the apostle or his delegates. We are agreed that the apostle founded institutions, we acknowledge a general principle of organization established by the word. We ask, From whom did the persons who possessed the authority of elders receive this authority? Can a voluntary assembly of Christians confer it? The question here is not of mysterious transmission—we do not speak of gifts; it is a question of conferring authority, for the elder possessed it. Who was it that conferred it? You make the people to be the source of this authority; as for me, I believe that Christ, acting by the apostles on whom He had conferred the power to do so, is the source. You say that the conferring of this authority is not noticed as an exceptional act belonging to the apostle alone. No act is thus mentioned in the word; but most of those which in your haste you have drawn attention to were done by others; and the only one which is presented in the word as accomplished by the apostles and their delegates alone is the choice and nomination of elders. It is the only thing bearing the form of an institution founded by the apostles in the establishment of which there was an action connected

solely with the apostleship. There was a revelation about the Lord's supper, but we know that the Lord had instituted it, and that other Christians took part in it. The apostles had an authority by which what they bound on earth was bound in heaven. They gave rules in the Church, but excepting this general principle which everyone acknowledges, the only exclusively apostolical act, and the only one which you omit, is the one which occupies us, namely, the choice and nomination of elders. It is not that the apostles did not have revelations and did not communicate the will of God, but other prophets might have done so, and even did. Authority lay in the apostles' hands.

All accusations, such as radicalism and rationalism, seem to me vulgar and unworthy of a man who has sufficient self-respect not to substitute abuse for argument; but I ought to make it plain, sir, that your idea of radicalism is false. Radicalism may have an organization as well as any other system; it has its regulations, its magistrates, its state councils (as is the case in the country of which you are a subject), as well as conservatives and aristocrats. The radical principle does not lie there, but it consists in this, that the people are the source of power, and have the right of placing at their head those who ought to govern them. Now this is precisely the system which you adopt with reference to elders. As for me, I contend that this power comes from above, from authorities constituted by Christ Himself, namely, the apostles.

You have made comparisons, but they fail as to application, because the subject of the investiture of individuals with offices and the question which occupies us is this, "Who has a right to put them there?" Now the

comparisons which you make do not affect this subject in the least.

In conclusion, there are directions given to Timothy, that he might know how he ought to behave himself in the house of God under every circumstance; but there is no general command to create elders. With reference to bishops, when any one desires to be one, the qualifications required are enumerated in a letter addressed to Timothy delegated by the apostle at Ephesus. Nothing more—nothing less. The expression "how one ought to behave" is not even connected with the appointment of elders. It is at the end of several directions with regard to other points. The deacons and their wives come between the two, and before that prayers and the conduct of women, etc. In the midst of these directions the apostle describes the character required of a bishop, if such a case should happen, without the least trace of a command to Christians to create any. To say that a letter to a superior authority, to a confidential delegate (and Timothy was such), in which it is said, "I write to thee that thou mayest know how one ought to behave" (for what you say of "one must" as being emphatic, has no foundation), to say that it is a command for every person to exercise acts of authority, which are specially confided to this authority, and this at all times, is an evident futility; it is as ridiculous as regards the individual who wishes to apply it to himself as it is dangerous for the whole Church of God.

There is only one more point for me to touch on—law. I am not astonished that you forsake truth here; that you do not know what you are doing in placing yourself under law. It is a very ordinary case. That the will of God, wherever it is expressed in the word, ought to

govern the Christian, is what every truly converted soul acknowledges. But, sir, the word of God is wiser than you are; it never places the Christian under law, nor under the obligation of the law after the death of Jesus. It was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. It speaks of commands: they are dear and precious and not painful to the real Christian. But the word never places a Christian under law; and I repeat, the word comes from a God who knows the heart of man, and who knows what is necessary for him and what is hurtful or impossible for him. He employed the law to convince of sin. The word expressly says that the law is not for the righteous; you say that it is. I believe in the word and in the wisdom of my God more than in you. I believe that He knows how to preserve holiness, without which no man shall see Him, better than you do, better than human wisdom does. He knows; and whoever is taught of Him and knows his own heart knows that the law, every law, is a minister of death and condemnation, and it is impossible that it should be anything else; and that if man is placed under a law in what way soever, either it must condemn him, or the obligation of the law must be weakened.

I see plainly that you are ignorant of this. You speak of the idea of obligation to the law, of the idea of law. Now if, being under obligation, you are bound by the law, you have certainly not truly kept it (though your new nature loves it, and love is the fulfilment of it); and if you have not kept it, and you are under obligation to do so, it condemns you, it justly drives you from the presence of God. If you are bound by die law, and have failed in its obligations (and such is the case), you must either weaken it and annul its obligations, or perish. Obligation

to a law requires either that it should be kept, or that one should be condemned by it: there is nothing else. It knows nothing of grace. It could know nothing of it. You have not kept it. Are you bound to do so? You must wipe off this obligation in order to escape. Faith and the grace of God alone maintain the authority of the law, because I acknowledge myself lost if I am under the law, and I see that Christ has undergone its curse, and has placed me in an entirely new position which unites two things: perfect righteousness before God, because it is the righteousness of God accomplished in Christ; and life, the participation of the divine nature according to the power of resurrection. I cannot have the two husbands, two obligations at the same time, the law and Christ. In Christ I am dead. Now the law has authority and is binding as long as we live; but being dead (because Christ died for me) I am delivered from the law that I may belong to another (this is the plain language of the word), to Him who is raised again from the dead that we may bring forth fruit unto God. Are you bound by the law? The law will strictly maintain its authority and this obligation; it must do so, and will condemn you as surely as you are a sinner. If I am dead, it has no more authority over me, for it cannot cross that barrier; I belong to Another. Through the law I am dead to the law, that I might live unto God; it is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me.

Christ was under the law during His life, in resurrection He is so no longer. Now the commands, whether they be called of God, or whether they be called of Christ, have another character for the Christian. All that Christ has said, all that His apostles have said, everything in which the Old Testament displays His will, direct and govern

the life which we already possess, and have the authority of the word of God, of God Himself, over our soul. I have life; the words of Christ, His commands (and whatever is found elsewhere in the word of the same character is the same in principle), are the expression of this life in Him, its fruits in every respect according to the perfection and according to the will of God Himself, and they are the directions for this life in me. By following them I walk according to the thoughts of God, and according to His will; it is the law of liberty, because I already possess the life of which it prescribes the perfection; and being the expression of the will of God, it is also obedience. But if you “return to the command” under the form of law, you return to death and condemnation. The law does not give life, does not give strength for holiness, any more than it justifies. From what you say, I do not believe you are delivered from the law. If you had felt what the law is, I do not think you would have said, Let us return to the command, or could have spoken of again setting up the observance of the command; because you would feel that on this ground you are lost, because the law has not lost its force, and throughout it is always (for man) a ministry of condemnation and death. I do not in the least reproach you. Many dear and precious souls are under law.

There are some who, wishing to teach the law, know neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. Have you read this part of the Epistle to Timothy? But what I know is, that the New Testament speaks to us of the law as of that from which we are delivered. It tells us that we are bound by the law as long as we live, but that we are dead; and it also says that we cannot have two husbands at once, the law and Christ (that is to say, be bound in

two ways to two objects). The apostle expresses himself thus, “To them that are without law, as without law (being not without law to God, but ennomos Christo)”—in subjection to, bound by obedience, to Christ. You cannot watch too carefully over holiness, and we are sanctified unto obedience. Independence of will is the principle of sin; but the law is not a means of attaining holiness. It does not give a new will, nor strength when one has one. The New Testament always speaks of it as a means of death, of condemnation, and of weakness; those who are of the works of the law (and these are not bad but good) are under the curse. It is not for the righteous (dikaio nomos ou keitai), nothing is more absolute. It is ignorance of what the heart of man is to imagine that he can be under a law coming from God and live.

As to the opinion you may form of my views on this point, it will be to me a matter of utter indifference; because the word of God is as clear as day. And it is evident to him who knows what man is, that man can have nothing to do with the law without weakening its obligations, except to be condemned by it; and that grace alone maintains its authority, because Another has borne its curse: because the word tells me that I cannot have two husbands at once. And if I put myself under a mixture of law and grace, I must pray God, as the people did with Moses, to hide His glory from me as unbearable; whereas, when I see it in Christ by the ministry of righteousness and of the Spirit, I can contemplate this glory with unveiled face, and be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Finally, sir, if I have failed in courtesy in alluding to “the failure of Christians,” I ask your pardon for it, as well as for everything for which any apology may be due. I have alluded to it as to a published book, in which one may imagine that your principles are more or less brought out. You have expressed them here, and I do not think more dangerous ones are to be found—namely, to use the expression of doing all in the name of Jesus, and adding that this does not hinder one from having studies and pleasures which have not Christ for their object. I do not believe that you have the slightest thought of using the liberty to which we are called for licentiousness; reproach of that kind would be out of place. But I leave it to every serious Christian to judge whether such a principle does not open a wide door for a life, I will not say, of open sin, but for a life where Christ is forgotten, in order to pursue every other possible thing as an object, and to find one’s pleasure everywhere excepting in Him. I am free with regard to everything; but to pursue as an object anything but Christ, to find my pleasures out of Him, and to use the expression of doing everything in the name of Jesus in that sense, is a loose and dangerous principle, if there be such. It is doubtless not law; but an invitation to the heart to leave Christ aside as its object, in order to do everything according to one’s own taste and pleasure under shelter of His name.

Certainly this is not a narrow way. This is not “one thing I do,” or esteeming all but dross that I may win Christ. Perhaps you may be inclined to consider this as purely apostolical, as a walk connected with that office alone, with the sole fact of the apostleship; nevertheless here, in words which ought to be considered as a command,

as a law, if you will—yes, sir, it is here, however weak our steps may be, that we are called to imitate Him. I am not under the law, but if God sanctifies us and directs our hearts to a new object which we pursue by the power of the Spirit, what you say is not the means of sanctification, of communion with God, of happiness—it is using the name of Christ, and the command to do all in His name, to justify one's having other objects than Him, and seeking one's pleasure elsewhere than in Him. You wish to be bound by the law, on the one hand, and to have other objects and other pleasures than Christ, on the other. It is a sad picture of a degenerate Christendom, very different from that which the Spirit gives us. But it is quite in keeping with the constitution of churches and the modern installation of elders.

226 Vevey, 1855.

227 It is Monsieur Demole's famous argument, that it is not said "and not otherwise" —an argument which annuls by a single dash of the pen all the rules and directions of the New Testament. It is never said, that I know of, "and not otherwise"; so that in every case one might change everything, and say, it is not said "and not otherwise." It is a complete justification of all the additions and alterations that popery has introduced in christian worship and ordinances. Doubtless that system does not act according to the word, but it is not said "and not otherwise," or, "in fact things may also have occurred otherwise." So that it cannot be reproached with anything on that score. And these gentlemen, who annul all the directions of the word by this single principle, that they may do otherwise when such is not forbidden by a "and not otherwise," accuse us of abandoning the word, and teaching the abolition of the

command! I do not know a more fearful principle, or one more destructive of the authority of God and His word, than this, which has now the sanction of Mons. de Gasparin. Remember, reader, that according to him, when the word gives a direction or a uniform example, and that it cannot be proved that it has not been also done otherwise, you have full liberty to abandon the direction of the word and do things as you please.

228 This is questionable. Inspiration does not depend solely on the apostleship; take for example the Gospels of Mark and Luke. Some persons who fully believe the Epistles of James and Jude to be inspired have questioned their having the two apostles of that name as their authors. The authority of the apostle is quite another thing from inspiration; and inspiration, like that of the prophets, is quite another thing from apostleship.

229 The word used here is exactly the same as that employed by the Holy Spirit to distinguish what the apostles, Paul and Barnabas, did with regard to elders.

230 I for a moment thought that these infidel expressions with reference to the communication of the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the apostles' hands—a thing that is clearly and solemnly stated in the word—might be attributed to Mons. de Gasparin's prepossession on the subject of the imposition of hands on elders. But, however probable that may be, it is never said nor implied that the apostles did lay their hands on them, and the transmission of the Holy Ghost by this means is very solemnly stated in the Acts and in 2 Timothy; and Mons. de Gasparin himself speaks of the charisma, that is to say, the gift conferred at first by the laying on of the apostles' hands. Charisma is the

expression used in the word for all gifts conferred by the extraordinary power of the Holy Ghost and has nothing at all to do with elders. Finally, Mons. de Gasparin speaks in an absolute manner of the laying on of the apostles' hands.

231 Note to Translation.—The French Socialist.

232 The other form of infidelity is that which refers to the authority and divine inspiration of the word. Sufficient attention has not been paid to the first form of infidelity. The Theological Review of Strasburg and all that school present both forms, and particularly the first.

Grace, The Power Of Unity And Of Gathering

Editor's Note 106

Beloved Brother,

I have had the desire on my mind to make a few remarks on a point I believe to have importance at the present moment; and in doing so, I carry in my mind a tract to which the circumstances drew attention, and practically review it. And I do so, the rather, because I think I read a paper some time back in “The Present Testimony,” which, if my memory serves me, placed the subject on a ground which I did not think quite just: that is, it saw only one side of the matter, as it seemed to me. I am not going to comment on it, as I apprehend you can edify your readers better by other means.

What I think important to be understood is, that the active power that gathers is always grace—love. Separation from evil may be called for. In particular states of the church, when evil is come in, it may characterise very much the path of the saints. It may be, that through many acting under the same convictions at the same time, this may form a nucleus. But this in itself is never a gathering power. Holiness may attract when a soul is in movement of itself. But power to gather, is in grace, in love working; if you please, faith working by love. Look at all the history of the church of God in all ages, and you will find this to be the case. Grace is the formative power of unity, where it does not exist. I take for granted here that Christ is owned as the centre. If evil exist, it may gather out of that evil, but the

gathering power is love. The paper which I would pass under review is a tract, which, from circumstances, is not unknown: “Separation from Evil, God’s Principle of Unity.” I trust I should have grace to acknowledge error where I thought there was such, and I am sure I owe it to the Lord to do so; but my object here is somewhat larger. That tract refers to the state of the church of God at large, and not any particular member of it; but as one part of truth corrects an evil, so another, by its operation on the soul, may enlarge the sphere, and strengthen the energy of good. There are two great principles in God’s nature, owned of all saints—holiness and love. One is, I may be bold to say, the necessity of His nature, imperative, in virtue of that nature, on all that approach Him; the other, its energy. One characterises; the other is, and is the spring of activity of, His nature. God is holy—He is not loving, but love. He is it in the essential fountain of His being; we make Him a judge by sin, for He is holy and has authority; but He is love, and none has made Him such. If there be love anywhere else, it is of God, for God is love. This is the blessed active energy of His being. In the exercise of this He gathers to Himself for the eternal blessedness of those who are gathered, its display in Christ, and Christ Himself, being the great power and centre of it. His counsels as to this are the glory of His grace, His applying them to sinners and the means He employs for it, the riches of His grace. And in the ages to come He will shew how exceeding great these were in His kindness to us, in Christ Jesus.

Allow me, in passing, before entering on the examination of the point which is now directly my object, to say a word on the sweet passage I have

referred to, because it opens out God's full thoughts in bringing into the unity of which that epistle speaks. We are blessed in Christ, and God Himself is the centre of the blessing, and in two characters, His nature and His relationship; He is both as related to Christ Himself, viewed as man before Him, though the beloved Son. The verses I refer to, are Ephesians 1:3-7. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. As the Lord, when ascending up on high, said, "I go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God "; only that here He goes on to the unity in Christ. There Christ speaks of them as brethren. In this double character then, in which God stands to Christ Himself, He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings, none left out, in heavenly places, the best and highest sphere of blessing, where He dwells; not merely sent down to earth, but we taken ourselves up there, and in the best and highest way, in Christ Jesus, save His divine title to sit on the Father's throne. Wonderful portion, sweet and blessed grace, which becomes simple to us in the measure in which we are accustomed to dwell in the perfect goodness of God, to whom it is natural to be all that He is, who could be no other.

In verse 4, we have "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ," according to the glory of the divine nature, introducing into His own presence in Christ that which shall be the reflex of itself, according to its eternal purpose. For the church in the thoughts of God (and, J may add, in its life in the Word), is before the world in which it is displayed. Here, it is His nature. We are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. God is holy, God is love, and in His ways, when He acts, blameless. Then

there is relationship in Christ, and His is that of Son. Hence in Him we are predestinated to the adoption of children to God Himself, according to His good pleasure, the delight and goodness of His will. This is relationship. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as God. This is the glory of His grace; His own thoughts and purposes, to the praise of which we are. He has shewn us grace in the Beloved. But in fact He finds us sinners. He has to put sinners in this place. What a thought! Here His grace shines out in another way. In this same blessed one, Christ the Son, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins—what we need, in order to enter into the place where we shall be to the praise of the glory of His grace—and this is according to the riches of His grace; for God is displayed in the glory of His grace, and need is met by the riches of grace.

Thus we are before God. What follows in the chapter is the inheritance which belongs to us through this same grace— what is under us. Into this I do not enter; only remarking, as I have elsewhere, that the Holy Ghost is the earnest of the inheritance, but not of God’s love. This is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given to us. These two relationships, of God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, will be found to unfold much blessing. They are of frequent occurrence in Scripture.

But interesting as that subject is, I turn now to the one before me. I have read over the tract I have referred to. I confess, it seems to me that one who would deny the abstract principles of that tract is not on Christian ground at all. I cannot conceive anything more indisputably true, as far as human statement of truth

can go. Still there is something more than truth to be considered, and that is, the use of truth. God's imputing no sin to the church, through grace and redemption, is always blessedly and eternally true. To a careless conscience, I may have to address other truth. Now, I repeat, that on reading that tract I do not see how a person resisting the principles stated, is on Christian ground at all. Is not holiness the principle on which Christian fellowship is based? And the tract is really and simply that. But two other points I believe it important to bring out along with that—one, in relation to man; the other, to the blessed God. The first is this: human nature we all own, and in a measure know, is a treacherous thing. Now separation from evil, when right, which I now assume, still distinguishes him who separates from him from whom he does so. This tends to make one's position important, and so it is; but with such hearts as we have, one's position mixes itself up with self—not in a gross way but in a treacherous one; it is my position, and not only so, but the mind being occupied with what has been important (justly so in its place) to itself, tends to make, in a measure, separation from evil a gathering power, as well as a principle on which gathering takes place. This (save as holiness attracts souls who are spiritual by a moving principle in them) it is not.

There is another danger: a Christian separates from evil, I still suppose, in a case in which he is bound to do so. Say, he leaves the corruptest system in existence; on this principle, it is the evil acting on the conscience of the new man, and known to be offensive to God, which drives him out. Hence he is occupied with the evil. This is a dangerous position. He attaches it, perhaps anxiously, to those he has left, to give a clear ground

why he has done so. They conceal, cover over, gloss, explain. It is always so where the evil is maintained. He seeks to prove it, to make his ground clear; he is occupied with evil, with proving evil, and proving evil against others. This is slippery ground for the heart, to say nothing of danger to love. The mind becomes occupied with evil as an object before it. This is not holiness, nor separation from evil, in practical internal power. It harasses the mind, and cannot feed the soul. Some are almost in danger of acquiescing in the evil through the weariness of thinking about it. At all events power is hot found here. God separates us surely from evil, but He does not fill the mind when it continues to be occupied with it; for He is not in the evil. It is quite true that the mind may say, Let us think of the Lord and drop it, and get a measure of quiet and comfort; but in this case the general standard and tone of spiritual life will be infallibly lowered. Of this I have not a shadow of doubt. The positive evil will not be actually acquiesced in; but God's horror of it is lost in the mind, and the measure of divine power and communion just proportionately lost, and the general path shews this. The testimony fails and is lowered. This is the widest evil—where there is conflict with evil not maintained in spiritual power—and creates the most serious difficulties to extended unity; but God is above all. The new nature, when in lively exercise, because it is holy and divine, revolts from evil when it comes before it. The conscience, too, will then be in exercise as responsible to God. But this is not all, even as to holiness. There is another, which in many (I may say, at bottom, in all) cases distinguishes real holiness from natural conscience, or conventional rejection of evil. Holiness is not merely separation from evil, but separation to God

from evil. The new nature has not merely a nature or intrinsic character as being of God. It has an object, for it cannot live on itself—a positive object, and that is God. Now this changes everything; because it separates from evil—which it abhors, therefore, when it sees it—because it is filled with good. This does not enfeeble its separation. It makes its abhorrence of it lively when it has to be occupied with it, but it gives another tone to that which is abhorrent to it, the possession of good sufficient, when it is not forced to think of evil, to put it quite out of mind and sight. Hence it is holy, calm, and has a substantive character of its own, apart from evil, as well as abhorrent of it. With us this can only be in having an object, because we are and ought to be dependent only so far as we are positively filled with God in Christ. We are occupied with good, and hence holy, for that is holiness; and, therefore, easily and discerningly abhorrent of evil, without occupying ourselves with it. It is God's own nature; He is essentially good; delights in it in Himself: and therefore He is abhorrent, in virtue of His goodness, of evil; His nature is the good, and hence in His very nature He rejects the evil. He will do so authoritatively, no doubt, in judgment; but we now speak of nature.

Hence you will find, that when it is in power, love precedes and makes holy, whether it be mutual or the enjoyment of it in the revelation of God. "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints," 1 Thess. 3:12, 13. So in 1 John 1, "That which was from the beginning,

which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."

Now here the separation from evil, walking in the light, in God's revealed character in Christ, in the practical knowledge of God as revealed in Christ, in the truth as it is in Jesus in whom the life was the light of men, is fully insisted on with lines as clear and strong as the Holy Ghost alone knows how to make them. He who pretends to fellowship, and does not walk in the knowledge of God according to that knowledge, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But what makes the fellowship? This keeps it pure—but what makes it? The revelation of the blessed object, and centre of it, in Christ. He was speaking of One who had won his own heart—who was the gathering power into fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. He knew by the Holy Ghost, and enjoyed what the Saviour had said, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." This was love, infinite, divine; and, through the Holy Ghost, the witness of it had communion with it and told it out, that others might have fellowship with him; and truly, his was such. They

joined in it. Now that, I apprehend, was gathering power. The object gathered to, necessarily involved what follows. So, indeed, he closes the epistle. “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true; that is, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” That is, the gathering power of good comes before the warning. This is the more remarkable in this epistle, because it is, in a certain sense, occupied with evil, is written concerning those that seduced them.

Holiness, then, is separation to God, if it be real, as well as from evil; for thus alone we are in the light, for God is light. This is true, in our first sanctifying—we are brought to know God, brought to God. If we come to ourselves it is, “I will arise and go to my father.” If it is restoration, “If thou wilt return, return unto me.” Indeed a soul is never restored really till it does; for it is not in the light so as to purge flesh, even if the fruits of flesh have been confessed; nor is sin seen as it is in God’s sight. Hence love comes in, in all true conversion and restoration, however dimly seen, or through however dark workings of conscience. We want to get back to God; there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared; otherwise, it is despair which drives us farther away. Indeed, what would or could restoration be if it were not to God. But, in the full sense of gathering, that is, to common fellowship, it is clearly the blessed object which reveals that in which we are to have the fellowship, which so gathers. We are to have fellowship in something, that is, with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. This, then, must draw hearts to itself, that

in their common delight in it their fellowship may exist. The principle of the tract is this, that in doing this it must separate from evil. It is “this-then-is-the-message” part of the statement. So Christ says, “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” Now here was perfect love, entire separation from all sin and condemnation of it. “In that he died, he died unto sin once” —separation from the world, and deliverance from the whole power of the enemy and the scene of it. It is perfect love drawing from everything to itself; shewing all was evil, absorbing the soul into what was good, in a saving way from it. But when we follow Him into life, all is gone from which He separated. “In that he liveth, he liveth unto God”; that is His whole being, so to speak. Now He is, in this life, made higher than the heavens—the divine glory I do not here enter into, but the life. It is a heavenly place He takes, and our gathering through the cross is to Him there, in the good where evil cannot come. There is our communion—entering into the Father’s house in spirit. And this, I apprehend, is the true character of the assembly, of the church, for worship in its full sense. It remembers the cross, it worships, the world left out, and all known in heaven before God. He gave Himself that He might gather into one. But here I anticipate a little, for I am speaking as yet of the object, not of the active power. I apprehend that what separates the saint from evil, what makes him holy, is the revelation of an object (I mean, of course, through the Holy Ghost working), which draws his soul to that as good, and thereby reveals evil to him, and makes him judge it in spirit and soul: his knowledge of good and evil is, then, not a mere uneasy conscience, but sanctification; that is, sanctification is resting, by the enlightening of the Holy Ghost, on an object, which, by

its nature, purifies the affections by being their object—creates them through the power of grace. Even under law it had this form, “Be ye holy for I am holy”; though, I admit, it there partook necessarily of the character of the dispensation. In the cross we have these two great principles perfectly brought out. Love is clearly shewn, the blessed object which draws the heart; yet the most solemn judgment of and separation from all evil; such is God’s perfectness—the foolishness and weakness of God. Divine attraction in love, evil in all its horror and forms, perfectly abhorred by him who is attracted and attaches himself to that. The soul goes with sin, as sin, to love, and goes there because love thus displayed has shewn him that it is sin, in being made sin for us. This is the power objectively that separates from evil, and ends all connection with it; for I die then to all the nature I lived to. Evil ceases to be, through faith, as I live hereafter in blessed activity in love. But I have, perhaps, dwelt long enough on what objectively gathers and gives fellowship; and surely, our fellowship, communion, is in that which is good—and as heavenly by no evil being there. Imperfectly realised no doubt here, but so far as it is not, fellowship is destroyed, for the flesh has none. Hence it is said: “If we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.” But we cannot walk out of darkness but by walking in the light, that is, with God: and God is love, and were He not, we could not walk there.

But we have other privileges; God’s love in Christ is not only an object which gathers—it is an activity which does so. Love is relative; it acts and shews itself. Hence God has acted. It is not the silent depths of self-consciousness which heathenism made of God, as mere

intellect, though erroneously supposing matter equally eternal, receiving merely form from God; though it then became active in generating thoughts— and, delighted with them objectively, became active in creation to produce them according to truth. In this scheme they justly made primeval darkness the mother of all things. But such is not our God. These, save in benefits sensibly known in creation, knew not love in God. Jesus has revealed Him, and we thus know Him to be love, and light, too. Blessed knowledge! It is, as given to us in the word, eternal life; and this life is occupied with it, as we have seen, with the Father and the Son. But we can equally say that we know this sweet and blessed truth: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." It is the activity of love which is the power of gathering. "He gave himself… that he might gather into one the children of God, which were scattered abroad." Even in Israel: "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Here we have not only the attractive, sanctifying object bringing into fellowship, but the activity of love, which acts, gives itself, in order to gather; in this we are allowed to have a part. It is this, while sanctifying and maintaining His holiness, making us partakers of it, reveals God and gathers weary souls.

Now this alone is the proper principle and power of gathering: I do not say on which souls are gathered; for that is clearly holiness—separation from evil in which alone communion is maintained—or darkness would have fellowship with light. But love gathers; and this is as evident to the Christian as that it gathers to holiness, and on the principle of it. For when would the mind of man separate from and leave the evil in which it lives,

which is its nature, alas! as to its actual desires, and the sphere in which it lives? Never! Alas! its will and lusts are there—it is enmity against God. This is what the presenting of grace in Jesus has so solemnly proved. Law was never given to gather; it was the rule of a people already with God—or a convicter of sin. Sin does not gather to God, nor law; and one or other is all man's state unless grace acts. Besides, grace alone fully reveals God; and hence without grace that to which we are to be gathered is not manifested. Grace alone reaches the heart so as to bring it—all short of this is responsibility merely, and failure. It is Christ gathers, and hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us. Indeed, truth itself is never known till grace comes. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The law told man what he ought to be. It did not tell him what he was. It told him of life if he obeyed, of a curse if he disobeyed; but it did not tell him that God was love; it spoke of responsibility; it said, "Do this and live." All this was perfect in its place, but it told neither what man was nor what God was; that remained concealed; but that is the truth.

The truth is not what ought to be, but what is—the reality of all relationships as they are, and the revelation of Him who, if there are any, must be the centre of them. Now that could not be told without grace, for man was a ruined sinner, and God is love. And how tell, moreover, that all relationship was gone107—for judgment is not a relationship, but the consequence of the breach of one—as the truth of any existing one, but in the revelation of that grace which formed one on this very ground by divine power? Hence we read "of his own will begat he us108 by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of

first-fruits of his creatures"; that incorruptible seed of the word. Hence Christ is the truth. For since, grace, God Himself, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, even, are revealed as they are; what man is in perfection, in relationship with God; what man's alienation from God; what obedience, what disobedience, what holiness, what sin, what God, what man, what heaven, what earth; nothing but finds itself placed where it is in reference to God, and with the fullest revelation of Himself, while His counsels even are brought out, and of which Christ is the centre. Hence grace is the acting power in and alone capable of revealing truth; for Christ's being here is grace; His working effectual grace.

Now, the very existence of such an object and such a power would prove a gathering power, gathering into unity, for it must, being divine, gather to itself; yet, we are not left to abstract consequences, however practically familiar to every renewed soul who does and must know, that all such are drawn together to Christ. The word of God is plain: "He should die … that he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." I speak of these things as characterising the power which gathers. Christ, though the truth itself, yet, while here, was lonely truth: no new relationship was established on a divine basis for other men. Hence presented grace was rejected grace; the corn of wheat abode alone; but, dying, redemption was accomplished and atonement made. He was no longer "straitened"; the grace and truth shut up, so to speak, into His own heart, could now flow freely forth. The highest love was shewn; and sin in man, instead of hindering its application and barring relationship, was its object, at least that as to which it was displayed; and

thus, therefore, He gathers. Divine righteousness supplants—what, indeed, never existed, though it was called for— human righteousness; divine life, mere human life; and God finds His glory in salvation. Grace reigns through righteousness. Now, this it is, by uniting souls in the power of the Holy Ghost to Jesus, which gathers by the cross, whence the truth is told to us as we are here, to Christ in heaven, who tells our true place to faith there—saving always, of course, His personal divine title.

Now this, I apprehend, is what Ephesians shews, only that as it begins with the divine glory, the true source of all, that epistle begins with the purpose of love as to us in heaven in glory; and brings in redemption itself as a second thing, needed to bring us there. But this clearly does not alter the love which is, and is acting to bring us into this blessed and heavenly unity, and which is thus heavenly, and, in connection with God's glory, is holy according to the holiness of His presence. Christ's path on earth is the pattern of it below— in its full measure on the cross. Hence heaven and the cross are correlative. When the blood went into the holiest the body was burnt without the camp—outside; yea, denying all relationship of God with man as he was. Then gathering into one began. He slew the enmity—as between Jew and Gentile—and reconciled both in one body to God; and so we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Ordinances always separate according to human holiness; grace unites according to divine.

I believe I have said enough to make what is in my mind plain; and I am more anxious to state than to insist on it. In the full divine sense, without grace, there is neither truth nor holiness (out of God, of course, I mean), save

as holiness may be applied to the elect angels—nor can be; because it is impossible that a sinner can be with God but on the ground and by the power and activity of grace. The power of unity is grace; and, as man is a sinner and departed from God, the power of gathering is grace—grace manifested in Jesus on the cross, and bringing us to God in heaven, and bringing us in Him who is gone there. This is holiness: certainly the cross was not acquiescence in evil.

Affectionately yours in the Lord,

J. N. D.

[End of Ecclesiastical—Vol. 1]

106 This paper, though issued a good deal later in date, is inserted as being the natural supplement to the foregoing tract.—Ed.

107 Morally, I mean, for we are, of course, creatures still.

108 Law begat nothing in me; it supposed man was, and that he belonged to God, and prescribed a way for him.