Papers on the Brethren

William Kelly

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“The Brethren”: A Historical Sketch

(B.T. Vol. N5, p. 223-224.)

This booklet of 30 pages has been sent by a reader of the B.T. who asks, “Is this book true or false?” To call it “false” might imply that the writer (whose name is purposely suppressed) stated what he knew to be untrue; but there need be no hesitation to say that it is in every respect unreliable. Like many party-men he is so shortsighted and onesided as to see nothing right but his own mistakes. “Separation” is his bugbear, “fellowship” his idol, not with the Father and the Son, but brotherly, which is often wrong. Scripture is decisive that “love” brings in what is of God; whereas “brotherly affection” may become faulty and faithless (2 Peter 1:7). Nor has the truth the first place for his soul. The great sin to him is not keeping together and welcoming everyone charitably hoped to be a, brother. Christ’s glory in the church and the saint by the word and Spirit of God, does not sway him.

Yet our leaving nationalism and denominationalism, as all but our weak ones did, if scriptural condemned all sects as opposed to God’s will; if unscriptural condemns our aim and position, which is a return to “what was from the beginning.” I admit the writer had no such principle, nor any other; for by his own account (p. 11) he bargained when coming into fellowship to stick to his clergyman’s ministry, and those who had to do with his reception were accommodating enough to exceed his demand. This was no doubt amiable on both sides; but God’s will or way was forgotten by all concerned. This looseness is what he admires; to me it is caring for self

and not Christ. I, as earlier than the writer, can say that it was not the rule in those days, though not disposed to question what he. states of his own personal experience.

About 1843 or 4 I remember a brother asking me what was to be done, if evil got the upper hand among those gathered to the Lord's name, as of old after the apostles; and replying that we must adhere in faith to what unfaithful souls compromised. So 2 Tim. 2:19-22 teaches. Alas! the need arose at Plymouth itself soon after, where a leader with several coadjutors came to the conclusion that "Brethren" were wrong ("Christian Witness," and all). Instead of going quietly out, as uprightness must have dictated, they chose to leaven the meeting there with his independent church system, ministerialism, and judaising (of the hope especially), to say nothing of personal conduct. Mr. Darby did all he could in vain to have this judged; and when the mass stuck to local majority, and gave up all sense of the Spirit's unity, and common consistency, he withdrew as did others, that they might be subject to the word and Spirit as before. Not long after a system of heterodoxy was discovered secretly at work in the same party. This was exposed to the deliverance of many and the scattering of the unworthy. But a part of western England really sympathised with the Plymouth system of independency, ministerialism, and the earthly hope to supplant the heavenly; and this is what the booklet tries to defend without knowing what was at stake.

Even if the alleged facts were correct (which they are far from being according to my information), the writer's notion of fellowship is a fallacy without a divine principle-neither truth, holiness, nor love. His ideal is a free-and-easy religious club with licence to roam at will,

spiritual nothingarianism, and exclusion of anything to try conscience as “contentious.” Where the Lord’s name is a living centre, Christians grow and correct themselves by the word and Spirit of God. Brethren, even when they met in Aungier St. (Dublin), used to settle on Saturday night for the scriptures and hymns on Lord’s day! Later still at Plymouth an elder’s chair was occupied at the Lord’s table. But they learnt ere long that “the gifts” of Christ are permanent; whereas “elders” required apostolic nomination direct or indirect. Now the writer seems not to have learnt this or anything else, making a tradition of lax ways however wrong. “The word of our God shall stand for ever;” though even this we can only use to His glory by the Holy Spirit.

The Plymouth Brethren

A reply to the “Christian Observer”, Art. II., December, 1866.

This evangelical magazine again assails the “Plymouth Brethren,” as they call them. Are they wise? It may be doubted; for while they own their hopelessness of convincing those they oppose, we are pretty sure that, the more they write on the subject, the more they expose their want of acquaintance with the principles of those attacked, with the Scriptures, and even with their own indefensible position. Many godly and intelligent persons outside “Brethren,” some even in their own Anglican fold, are ashamed of their advocate, and of his objections, which are never well-founded, sometimes suicidal, always frivolous. We are not so unreasonable as to expect that those who pronounce the clerical system to be anti-scriptural can ever find favour in the eyes of clergy as such; but there are servants of Christ who, spite of being clergymen, value the faith of those who at all cost carry out practically what they themselves know to be according to God’s word. Naturally, among laymen so-called, there are many more who agree with us that the clerical system grew at best out of a graft of Judaism, that it is wholly opposed to Scriptural ministry as instituted of the Lord, and that it is inconsistent not merely with the best interests but with the fundamental constitution of the Church of God. Of course, those who justify that innovation of patristic times cannot cry up those who denounce it as sinful. The next best thing they can do, as far as we (not they) are concerned, is to cry us down; for this always makes manifest their own

weakness, gives candid Anglicans an opportunity of comparing scriptural principles and practice with their own ways as well as ours, and keeps the subject as one of present, permanent, and great importance before all who read and hear. More prudent adversaries avoid the perilous game of confronting the Scriptures as to ecclesiastical ground, walk, and discipline, on which the so-called “Brethren” seek to act in the face of Christendom which let them slip from the earliest days as impracticable.

By those who read this journal, whether among or outside “Brethren,” a refutation of these articles can hardly be wanted. The writer is therefore under a surprising and groundless illusion if he really believes what he says, that the former article “seems indeed (and here it has exceeded our expectations) to have gone, like a Palliser shot, right through all the iron coating of their system, and to have caused much fright, even within the vessel, by the scattered splinters.” (Page 896.) There is as much truth in this romance as there was weight in the arguments; but the self-complacency of the whole thing is singularly grotesque.

In the same page the writer claims no small vantage-ground in being able to look at us from without. Will he dispute that it is better sometimes to look from within as well as without? But granting that a look from without has its value, does he not perceive that on his own showing the advantage is greatly on their side who have examined Anglicanism as well as “the Brethren” both from without and from within? Our mathematical friend ought not to need the lesson that a whole is greater (or better) than a part. For myself, I believe that the proposed criterion is only partially true, and quite fails

in divine things. There is a testimony to those without, sufficient to leave without excuse, as will be seen another day, and now used by the grace of God to produce conviction through faith; but all our best blessings in Christ, or even in the Church, His body, must be tasted within in order to be adequately known. But let us hear our accuser.

“One of the gravest charges we have to make against the Plymouth Brethren is, that they take the most extraordinary liberties with God’s Holy Word.1 While professing the most entire subjection to every word of the Lord, and chiding all who do not join them with the want of that subjection, they set aside the far greater part of Scripture as not applicable to the present age of the Church, and as of no present authority or obligation. Here we shall be met again with the charge of misrepresentation; but we assert that this is no misrepresentation in the sense we mean. Their great knowledge of Scripture, and their readiness in applying it in its spiritual sense, is one of the things we continually hear advanced in favour of the Plymouth Brotherhood. We fully admit that they are most of them well up in the contents of the Bible; that they are very ready with quotations; that they can find a spiritual sense for almost every word of it: but here lies our complaint. They spiritualize it till they pulverize it all into fine dust, which any one’s breath may blow clean away. Now for the proofs. They condemn us of the Church of England for repeating the Psalms of David in our Christian service; these, they say, are Jewish, expressing feelings belonging to the Old Dispensation, and altogether unsuited to the now: thus the whole Book of Psalms goes aside, except in the spiritual sense in

which parts of it may be thought to relate to the person or work of Christ. With this aside goes the whole of the Old Testament, except so far as that is prophetical or can be spiritualized." (Page 897.)

Did one ever hear greater confusion and absurdity, giving the writer credit for meaning to say the truth? The first proof, then, of this heinous charge is that we! spiritualize the Psalms! That we read them habitually alone and with our families, that we hear them in our assemblies, that we preach on them and expound them and write on them and publish our expositions far and wide, and this not alone historically or prophetically, but also for our soul's profit and blessing and the present edification, of all believers, does not satisfy. "Here lies our complaint. They spiritualize." Now I appeal to any intelligent man in the English Establishment: Does not the Christian Observer herein state exactly the reverse of the truth in both its parts? Is it not plain and notorious and undeniable matter of fact that those who use the Psalms in their Christian service must necessarily spiritualize them? and that one main reason why "Brethren" do not use them as the expression of their worship is because they refuse to spiritualize the Psalms of David? They believe the Psalms in their plain and direct meaning, and accordingly see in them the sympathies of the Messiah with the godly Jews, also their Aaronic priesthood, incense, sacrifices, and all the other appurtenances of an earthly land and a city here below. All this the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches them to be now superseded for the partakers of the heavenly calling, on the footing of accomplished redemption and of a priest after the order of Melchizedec, no longer

typified or predicted, but actually on high appearing in the presence of God for us.

It is therefore the Christian Observer's own system, not Plymouth Brethrenism, which really comes under the charge of spiritualizing. For those who employ the Psalms of David in the christian service as the proper and full expression of christian worship are obliged to fall back on the mystical process in its extreme form in order to effect a tolerable metamorphosis. Hence David's throne must be made the throne of God; Israel, Judah, etc., must set forth Christians; Zion and Jerusalem must be the Church now on earth, now in heaven; the pleasant land has to be construed of the Father's house; the wars must be taken as a figure of spiritual conflicts, and the destructive judgments on the enemies of the Jews must be converted after some analogous fashion. If this be not spiritualizing, what is? Is it not the basis on which reposes the use of the Psalter in so-called christian services all over Christendom? Was it not the system (probably derived from Platonizing Jews) of Clemens Alex., Origen, as of Jerome and other Latins, and soon prevalent, all but universal? From this mischievous system the Reformation delivered only in part, not merely because the Reformers, like ourselves, were but disciples imperfectly instructed, but because they were much fettered and hindered by their respective governments from carrying out all they saw. However this be, and whether spiritualizing be right or wrong, the misapprehension of our censor is as complete as can be. For spiritualizing, which he so unqualifiedly blames, is abjured by the "Brethren" and is in full force in the Establishment; and the use of the Psalms in the christian

service, for which he contends, is only consistent on the ground of spiritualizing, which he mistakenly lays at our door.

The truth is that the Psalms, like the law, are divinely inspired and profitable to all: only like the law, they must be used lawfully. I quite acquiesce in the principle of the Christian Observer that what is called spiritualizing is dangerous where it supplants or interferes with the real distinct scope of the Holy Ghost in any part of God's word. But I appeal to his own conscience: does he not perceive that he wrote under some strange spell which inverted his vision and falsified his conclusion? For beyond a doubt it is his own system, not ours, which, to accommodate the Psalms to christian purposes, yields to the common error of spiritualizing, which we both agree in denouncing. "Brethren" however, I humbly think, enjoy a decided superiority over their unexpected ally in this, that they honestly act out what they believe by God's grace — at least such is their hearty desire and strenuous aim. Hence, rejecting the later patristic and still popular mysticizing of the Psalms, they believe that the evident character and contents of that wondrous book demonstrate it to be an inspired provision, as for the past, so for the future devotions of Israel, in public and private; while it also opens its treasures meanwhile to us, Christians, furnishing copious and rich and touching expression to the heart's exercises and outpourings before God for the present and all time. In our walk and varying states of soul, beside prediction of Christ and His work, who shall set limits to the measure of our appropriation and enjoyment of the Psalms? Certainly not the "Brethren." Here the Christian Observer is inexcusably ignorant and mistaken. If he

takes the ground of competent knowledge, I arraign him of positive untruth. The “Practical Reflections on the Psalms” in the Bible Treasury, not to speak of what everybody knows who knows “Brethren” moderately, suffice to contradict flatly his statement. Indeed the New Testament freely applies the Psalms as we use them freely. But thence to infer that the Psalms contemplate our present standing and service as Christians is as false and unreasonable as it would be to deduce, from a similar employment of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, that we are not under grace but law, with an earthly priesthood, carnal sacrifices, and a worldly sanctuary.

The same principle applies to the Old Testament. None but the most ignorant fancy it is the same state of things now that the blood of the new covenant is shed, though the knowledge of it is not yet given to the house of Israel. The writings of the Old Testament mainly occupy themselves with the state of people under the law, save that the prophets, as indeed the types of all the other books, looked on to better things. Faith now knows, as to all the promises of God, the Yea and Amen in Christ. All Scripture accordingly is for us in these days of the gospel; the mistake is that it is all about us. The state before the fall differed essentially from that which followed the fall; and new conditions ensued on the flood. The call of Abram and the dealings with the fathers were not at all the same as those known previously. So also the days of Moses saw new ways of God, as the law of course raised the question of righteousness in a more definite shape than had been before it was given. Then, again, without noticing the details of Israel’s history or the times of the Gentiles

which began with the supremacy of Babylon, the coming of Christ and yet more His cross laid the foundation for all that is now or ever shall be, though even so the age to come will be wholly diverse from that which now is, and the eternal state, when the new heavens and new earth are in their full and final consummation, will differ from both as indeed from all the past dispensations also. Now the Scriptures treat of all these varying states from first to last, and the revelations of God adapt themselves in His wisdom to all that has been or will be during the vicissitudes of the earth or rather of men upon it. That they are all about us who now believe in Christ is untenable; that they are all for our instruction and direction, none can hold too tenaciously, which is indeed the reason why we notoriously study the whole from Genesis to Revelation. If they considered that any part of the Old Testament was not of real present value to the soul, it is absurd to suppose that “Brethren” generally, abroad or at home, teachers and taught, would read, hear, teach, meditate on it as they do. The only persons entitled to bring such a charge are men so grossly in the dark as to deny all difference of dispensation, if there be such. If the Christian Observer allow (as I presume they do) different dispensations, they admit the principle which lies at the bottom of their objection: all else as to this is a question of detail and degree.

“But worse still: it is not the Old Testament only that is thus made null and void as respects authoritative instruction, but also a great part of the New Testament. The Gospel of St. Matthew, for instance, it is assumed, was written specially for the Jews, and contains peculiar Jewish phraseology, such as the expression, ‘the kingdom of heaven:’ therefore it is ruled that it relates

specially, if not only, to the intermediate dispensation, or period between the birth of Christ and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost when according to the Plymouthites, and not before, the Church of God came into existence." (Page 897.)

"Brethren" need not to be told that in every respect this is a string of blunders, founded on truth or statements which the writer did not even comprehend. "As respects authoritative instruction," they hold that all Scripture stands on the same foundation which never fails. They do hold, as christian writers have done from the earliest days to our own that Matthew was inspired to write his gospel in view of the Jews and the relations of their Messiah, and the consequences of His rejection; but they see with equal clearness that "the kingdom of heaven" goes through the entire dispensation, as it is called, in its present mysterious form (Matt. 13), and that it is the only Gospel in which Christ announces the building of His Church (Matt. 16), and lays down the spirit which ought to regulate discipline in the case of one brother trespassing against another. (Matt. 18) The Christian Observer ought to be more careful: the allegations are quite unfounded, though it may be unintentionally.

As to the charge that the Church of God, Christ's body, began at Pentecost, it is quite true that such is the conviction of most or all "Brethren," though no one is required to believe it. The Christian Observer reasons thus: — "Mr. Kelly fails to see that he has fallen into the absurdity, in his interpretation of the words — 'The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved' — of making them to be added to a thing that, according to him, did not exist; or rather, to go a little further back,

the three thousand souls converted on the day of Pentecost, respecting whom the word ‘added’ is first used, must thus have been added on to nothing, if the Church had no existence before!” (Page 898.) The blunder is exclusively on the part of the Christian Observer. Even if the Lord’s adding to the Church daily such as should be saved had referred to Pentecost, the error was disgraceful; for the Lecture criticised had drawn attention to the 120 names of brethren in Jerusalem. Were they, including the twelve apostles, nothing? But the case is in fact much worse. For in Acts 2:47 the Holy Spirit (of whom the Christian Observer likes to hear as little as possible, at least through the “Brethren”) is describing the additions which the Lord was making from day to day after Pentecost with its three thousand souls added to the previous band of disciples and the Twelve. Does the Christian Observer fail to see now that itself alone has fallen into absurdity at the very moment when it was seeking, without reason, to charge it on another?

“He [Mr. K.] finds the word Church for the first time in those words of Christ to Peter — ’Upon this rock I will build My Church,’ and because the future tense is here used, ‘I will build,’ he infers that this must have had reference to what was to take place at the future period of the Pentecost; and because he never meets with the word ‘Church’ in the New Testament before, that no such thing was before known of! He thus falls into precisely the same mistake as the Baptists,” etc. (Page 898.) Perhaps it may save time if I at once summon not a P. B. but a Bp. of Chester in days of yore, who has never been surpassed there in the combination of solid learning with excellent powers of mind, especially of

reasoning — the celebrated John Pearson in the most celebrated of his writings, a textbook for Anglican clergy everywhere. “The only way to attain unto the knowledge of the true notion of the Church is to search into the New Testament, and from the places there which mention it, to conclude what is the nature of it. To which purpose it will be necessary to take notice that our Saviour, first speaking of it, mentioneth it as that which (Matt. 16:18) then was not, but afterwards was to be; as when He spake unto the great apostle, ‘Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church;’ but when he ascended into heaven, and the Holy Ghost came down, when Peter had converted ‘three thousand souls’ (Acts 2:41), which were added to the ‘hundred and twenty’ (Acts 1:15) disciples, then was there a Church (….) for after that we read, ‘The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.’ (Acts 2:47.) A Church then our Saviour promised should be built, and by a promise made before His death; after His ascension, and upon the preaching of St. Peter, we find a Church built or constituted, and that of a nature capable of daily increase.” In his posthumous work containing his “Lectiones in Acta Apostolorum” all this is given again as his ripest judgment, which, as far as it goes, coincides entirely with the “Brethren” and condemns the Christian Observer of ignorance, not only of Scripture but of their own ablest writers, where they were most confident.2 Hear again: “Is Mr. Kelly really so ignorant as not to know that the word ἐκκλησία is constantly used by the Septuagint translators for the Hebrew word which in our English translation is rendered ‘congregation’ or ‘assembly?’ The idea of Church, then, was no new thing. Mr. Kelly makes a great parade of his knowledge of the Greek, and of the various readings of

the New Testament, where it suits his purpose: he could even tell us that 'the Holy Ghost' used the singular 'the Church' where our version has Churches (Acts 9:31); but how is it that he has not discovered that the word, 'the Church' in the passage, 'the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved,' is not found in the ancient MSS. but is an unauthorized interpolation; and yet upon this groundless basement he has built his grand fabric, that now for the first time God's Church came into existence." (Pages 898, 899.)

Now in the same page of the Christian Observer there is printed an extract from my Lectures on the Church, which to any man of sense and temper would testify (if the writer questioned my acquaintance with the fact), that the LXX. (as is also done exceptionally in the New Testament) employ the word ἐκκλησία in the sense of the congregation of Israel. I expressly said "The Church, in the New Testament sense of the word," i.e., as the body of Christ; and I challenge this writer, or anybody else, to produce instances from the Septuagint where ἐκκλησία is so used. His insinuation, his logic, and his learning are equally at fault, not to speak of good manners, which I hope one may expect from a decent evangelical journal. If this be so, "the idea of the Church" was a new thing in the sense in question; for there never was before even the thought divulged of believing Jews and Gentiles taken out of their natural associations and united on earth in one body with the Head glorified in heaven. And so far is it from being true that my books referred to contain a parade of Greek and various readings, that, on the contrary, every scholar must see that I refrain from these topics save where the truth would be, in my judgment, seriously affected by

reticence. Further, it was my dislike to talk of “the Greek” and “the right translation,” which led me to speak, as I do not infrequently, of the blessed “Spirit of God” saying so and so, which I think I never do unless perfectly sure of my ground. But enough of this.

As to the criticism on Acts 2:47, I recommend the Christian Observer to beware of damaging its character by allowing men to venture on that serious task who are such novices as my reviewer. If his ignorance made him ridiculously timid and captious (not to say more) as to Acts 9:31, his ignorance makes him ridiculously rash as to Acts 2:47. “How is it that he [Mr. K.] has not discovered,” etc. Let me answer that I have not now discovered anything of what he says, but that I am perfectly sure he knows hardly anything of the matter, no matter what books he had to help him. His statement is in every point of view unfounded. 1, I knew the various readings of this verse quite familiarly, but a statement of them here would have been mere “parade,” because the determination of the point is not clear or sure. 2, It is false that the words “the Church” are not found “in the ancient MSS.” Is not the famous Codex Bezae of Cambridge a venerable manuscript? Is not Laud’s copy of the Acts (now in the Bodleian) an “ancient MS.?” 3, So far is it from being “an unauthorized interpolation,” that it is the reading of the vast majority of manuscripts, supported by both the Syriac, the Arabic, and Slavonic versions, not to speak of early citations; though it is wanting in the Sinai, Vatican, Alexandrian, and Rescript of Paris, a few juniors, and the rest of the versions. 4, So far from being “a groundless basement,” (as says this slashing sutor ultra crepidam), the greatest of living editors, Prof. Tischendorf, who had

yielded in his first edition of the Greek Testament, has replaced τῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ in his following editions (except of course his strange Greco-Latin one, Paris 1842), and Griesbach, who is inferior in acumen to none of the past editors, never removed the words.3 But the fact is, that the editors who, like Lachmann, omit τῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ take ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό from the beginning of Acts 3 (as in the received text). Now this makes the sense in substance the same as if τῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ were read. “And the Lord was adding daily those that should be saved together.” In this case Acts 5:11 would be the first occurrence of the word, referring to the assembly, or Church, as an existing and known institution; but this would fall in with the idea that the assembly, not yet begun to be built when Christ was on earth, actually commenced at Pentecost and is ever afterwards recognised as a subsisting fact. Lastly, even if the words were removed, my doctrine of the Church is affected no more by their removal than the doctrine of the Trinity by the exclusion of the unquestionable interpolation in 1 John 5. Nor would it be shaken if there were half a dozen dubious insertions of the word ἐκκλησία, for happily both the word and the general truth, presented in a variety of forms and phrases, cover a large part of the Acts of the Apostles as well as the Epistles of Paul.

The writer next (page 899) repeats (on a vague reference which, as far as I can see, does not confirm in the slightest degree his statement) that Matthew’s Gospel is relegated to the transition between the beginning of our Lord’s ministry and the development of the christian system. (i.e. Pentecost, page 897). I believe it to be one of his usual blunders; for not only have I failed to discover the smallest ground for it in the

“Papers on the Gospels,” reprinted from the Christian Witness, but it is notoriously contrary to the views which everywhere prevail among “Brethren” on the point. What makes the mistake on his part the graver is that he imputes a motive here, as he often does elsewhere. Some men never seem to feel that there are those on earth who are above every consideration save homage to divine truth. And here it is my duty to tell him that he affirms what is utterly inconsistent with fact, in saying that “the Plymouthites get rid of the application of the parables, which describe, under the phrase ‘the kingdom of heaven,’ the mixed condition of the Christian Church till the Lord comes again, and confine that to a very limited period.” They do neither the one thing nor the other, as every intelligent person who has read their expositions on this gospel, or even short tracts, must know. They teach, on the contrary, that the “kingdom of heaven,” though in substance equivalent to and hence often interchangeable with “kingdom of God,” differs nevertheless in this that the latter is applied to the state of things while Christ was on earth, the former never is said to be come or set up till He went to heaven. They, as strongly as the Christian Observer, do hold that the parables of the kingdom suppose a mixed condition, and that they extend till the Lord comes again. But that “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” are not absolutely equivalent terms, is clear and certain from the fact that Matthew uses both terms, and that you could not always, if ever, substitute “kingdom of heaven” in the few passages of his gospel where “kingdom of God” occurs. Our Lord’s teaching we believe to be eternal truth: only we must also bow to His own declaration, “I have yet many things to say unto on, you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the

Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all the truth." And so He did; and we seek to be obedient to His words and to the Holy Ghost's further communications in the Epistles, whether to the Corinthians or to any others. But we suppose that what is addressed to the members of the Church of God, as to matters of common concernment and duty, do not warrant us, or the writer in the Christian Observer, to claim the authority of Timothy or Titus.

Mark the sophistry of pp. 899, 900. "How do the Plymouth Brethren, in their 'assemblies,' carry out such injunctions as these? — 'I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.' Again; 'I will that men pray everywhere lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.' This relates, surely, to the general Church, and is of general obligation." 1, What extreme preoccupation to overlook the fact that the same letter may contain matter of common obligation, along with peculiar instructions which suppose and are addressed to one possessed of authority and gift conferred for the work to be done by him! 2, Christian men can and do pray everywhere amongst us, while it is impossible on Anglican principles. 3, It is not only fallacious in reasoning but evil in morals to urge that "there is nothing here about waiting till the Holy Ghost sensibly moves us to do these things; they are to be done as a matter of apostolic ordainment." It was the Lord who rebuked Satan's misuse of a scripture with "It is written again." The Christian Observer falls into the same snare. 1 Timothy 2 is not opposed to, but agrees with, 1

Corinthians 14. Paul does not contradict or weaken the earlier communication by the later injunction. Prayer, thanksgiving, prophesying, etc., fall under the common principle of dependence on the power and guidance of the Spirit of God, though they are also regulated by the Lord's authority through the apostolic epistles. To set one against another, as is here done, is the enemy's work. 4. So far are we from making void this part of Scripture, that on the contrary we tax those with that sin who merely borrow from it the names of bishops, elders or presbyters, and deacons and then, set its instructions at nought, besides contenting themselves without the requisite authority. For it is certain by the confession, not only of all the unbiassed, but even of many Anglicans spite of their prejudices, that bishops and presbyters are not two distinct orders but one; and, again, that the diaconate of Scripture has not a feature in common with the unmeaning noviciate which Anglicanism with Popery has inherited from the Catholic system. The christian congregation may look out such trustees of its bounty and external services as deacons; but apostles or their delegates alone can choose elders or bishops. Who then is justly chargeable with setting aside this part of God's holy word? — those who in effect employ it to gain the credit of a scriptural name for their own officials, but who wholly set aside the only source, process, character, and ends of the appointment which Scripture sanctions? or those who, in the fear of God and faith of His word, refuse every infringement of these and all other scriptures, whatever it may cost them? Is it not more humble and deferential to Scripture to confess our lack of due authority rather than to imitate what nobody possesses more than ourselves?

Whether the Christian Observer defends the notion of apostolic succession, is unknown to me: as being an evangelical organ, it is to be presumed that they abandon that pretension to others. Who then is to do the work of Paul and Barnabas in ordaining elders? Who is to take up the task deputed to Titus by the Apostle Paul? Those who claim and exercise such authority ought to prove that they are similarly, or at least validly, invested with it by the Lord. The attitude of “Brethren” is simple and clear. We do not go beyond the word of God, and are thankful that, if we cannot do all that the apostles or their delegates did, we can freely do whatever God is pleased to put within our little compass, and find our own blessing and the profit of others proportionate to our fidelity and lowliness, which we pray Him to increase. It is confessed by all men of any weight, and, if it were not, it is patent to every believer in the word of God, that to preach and pray, to baptize and break bread, never needed ordination even in presence of the entire college of apostles. Hence our doing any or all these things, as God leads and enables us, is strictly within the limits of the general orders of Him whose we are and whom we serve. If any men exhibit the qualities required in such as desire to be bishops, or elders, and deacons, we own them and their labours, valuing them for their work and submitting to them as over us in the Lord. This 1 Thess. 5, 1 Cor. 16, Rom. 12, show we can do without exceeding our bounds, or imitating Paul and Titus, as some do. Far from narrow views of ministry, we recognize real ministers as well as members in the English Establishment, and of course in the various orthodox Dissenting Societies, as heartily as among our selves. But this does not hinder our conviction that unscriptural arrangements (partly relies of Popery,

partly through governmental influence, partly through lack of heed to God's word) have effaced much truth as to the Church and ministry for Christians in general. Is this impossible or even improbable? I am surprised that any man pretending to teach others should fail to distinguish between an exhortation in 1 Timothy 2 meant expressly for all christian men and women, and a charge as to dealing with bishops meant for Timothy. Any and all in Timothy's position may act and ought to act thus; but surely all who do so should have credentials like Timothy. Who are they now? (Page 900.) Those who set up to do what Timothy or Titus did without their authority seem to act "most presumptuously," not those who confine themselves within what they are sure is their duty before God. What would have been thought of, what would have befallen, the Roman citizen in the days of Domitian or Nerva who, because he found a description of Roman officers (say in Cicero's letters), proceeded incontinently to appoint them alone or with others? "The Plymouth Teachers," as they are called, are clearly on the side of legitimate authority; the Christian Observer is here broaching the rights of man, or rather the wrongs of anarchy. The principle of their argument is religious radicalism, their practice is insubjection to Scripture: "Brethren" abhor both.

"Our authority shall again be Mr. Kelly. Upon this point he is most positive and dogmatic. This is one of his statements: 'In fact, as far as the New Testament speaks — and it speaks fully and precisely, (the italics in the following are his own) — 'no one was ever ordained by man to preach the gospel.'" And what is the refutation? For there is nothing like having a clear, downright

(“most positive and dogmatic”) statement to deal with, if it be erroneous. “Now this is asserted, be it remembered, in the face of the fact that each of the elders whom Titus was ‘to ordain in every city’ was to have this qualification, that he was to be one ‘holding fast the faithful word, in teaching, that he may be able both to exhort and convince the gainsayers.’“ And then he proceeds to compare me to the voice of the Vatican, a pope, etc. Really the Christian Observer is fallen to a low ebb if they can put forward no more competent person to defend their own system or to combat those whom they may believe wrong. I warned them already of this writer’s inability to do service. If they are still unable to appreciate the state of the case, they have many friends who will discern the worth of such talk as this: argument it is not, still less is it unfolding the precious and sure testimonies of God. Does the writer not comprehend that preaching the gospel, or evangelizing, is wholly distinct from the functions of an elder? I will not accuse him of anything undue in adopting the marginal alternative, though in my judgment the common text is better than the active sense which thus comes in so awkwardly. But letting it pass, no “Plymouth Brother” doubts that an elder was ordained by competent authority, and that his duty was with sound teaching both to exhort and to refute gainsayers; but how does this prove that he or anybody else was ordained to evangelize? Nay, I am bold enough to go farther and to affirm that multitudes preached freely in the best days of the Church, when the fullest authority was there, without question of ordination; and that he who disputes my affirmation seems to me open to the just reproach of excessive boldness and of no less ignorance of his Bible. (See Acts 8:4; Acts 11:19-21; Acts

18:24-28, etc.) Even teaching was not the work for which the elders were chosen, but to rule. Hence, says the apostle (1 Tim. 5:17), “let the elders that rule (or, take the lead) well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.” Thus, their business was ruling, overseeing, shepherding the church within a given sphere: if they took the lead well, they were to be esteemed worthy of double honour, especially those labouring in word and doctrine, which last clause implies an excellent service that was beyond their required episcopal functions. It was necessary that a bishop should be (not exactly “a teacher” but) “apt to teach,” possessed of a capacity for instruction. Others might be teachers, yet not eligible for exercising oversight, because of the want of moral power for government, which last was the chief desideratum in an elder.

If Scripture nowhere pledges the perpetuation of an ordaining authority, what is the fair inference? Is it not a perfect standard? Was it not provided for all times and circumstances? Did not God who wrote it give us every requisite for obedience and godly order, individually and corporately, ruler and ruled, teachers and taught, till the Lord come? Is anything lacking to its words which ought to be supplied? It is not “Brethren” at least who imply that it is defective and needs either the supplement of tradition, the system of development, or the new inventions of human wit.

Let us test the principle by facts. Who honour most the Epistles, not to the Corinthians or the Ephesians only, but to Timothy and Titus — the Christians who let the government of the day choose the bishops or elders; or those who own they have not those apostolic envoys,

and therefore refuse to go beyond their measure, whether as simple disciples or as possessing gifts as teachers, evangelists, etc.? Far from slighting, it is their sense of the superior place and the definite mission of such as Timothy and Titus, which makes themselves shrink from the pretension to appoint and regulate bishops as those did. There is no arguing in a circle, any more than setting aside the scripture. We cannot but tell the Dissenter that he disobeys them, because in his system the church chooses men to minister in the word and to rule; we cannot but tell the Anglican that he is at least as guilty, because in his system the squire, or the Lord Chancellor, or a college, or the crown chooses similarly: both parties in manifest opposition to the uniform practice of the early Church and to the plain word of God. It needs no "positiveness of a pope," but only the simplicity of faith in Scripture, to know without a doubt that these Dissenting and Anglican methods are at issue with the only principle of ordaining elders laid down in the Bible. Yet because we hold to this firmly and say so, we are charged with nullifying the Epistles to Timothy and Titus and "taking extraordinary liberties with God's written word!" (Page 99l.) As honestly asserting the place of apostolic delegates and cleaving to these very epistles, we are obliged to condemn the present practice of Christendom as palpably unscriptural. Will the Christian Observer dare to affirm that Anglican or Dissenting appointments (which indeed cannot both be scriptural) are the same as the apostle enjoined on Timothy and Titus? I can understand his soreness and hard names: it is usual with men who know themselves wrong.

“For what purpose, then, we ask again, as respects us, were the Epistles to Timothy and Titus written?” Surely one weighty lesson, and in order not the last perhaps in the present state of Christendom, is that no Christian should sanction a direct violation of that which they teach us as to the appointment of elders. The Christian Observer knows perfectly well that Anglican appointments are not according to those epistles, any more than the popular call of Dissent. If any of the “Brethren” set himself to ordain elders because Titus was commissioned so to do, there would be good reason to challenge his authority and to denounce his acts. Is it not rather too bad to blame us because we refuse any such assumption in deference to these and other scriptures, and frankly allow that none of us has the place of a Timothy or a Titus in this respect?

But the second lesson we gather from these epistles is that a very small part indeed is confined to this peculiar relation of the apostolic delegates to elders. It is in fact with them as with almost all other scriptures: if certain points here and there are special, much the greater portion directly concerns believers in general, and every whit is or ought to be instructive to us all. Thus, from first to last in these epistles, how much there is of the deepest importance to every Christian! The value of sound doctrine, the rejection of fables and unprofitable questionings, the end of what the apostle enjoined, even love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and unfeigned faith, and the danger of missing this in the desire to be law-teachers, with the lack of intelligence which invariably accompanies it (for such pervert the law unlawfully to the righteous, instead of knowing and using its application to the lawless, impious, unholy,

violent, unclean, and in short anything else contrary to sound doctrine according to the gospel of the glory committed to the apostle): all this is but the beginning of 1 Timothy 1. But why need I thus enlarge? The present value “as respects us” is unquestionable; and even that which was exceptional, so far from dying with Paul or Timothy, has this momentous and living use, that it furnishes a divine test to judge whether those who now assume Timothy’s functions as to elders have Timothy’s qualifications and authority. My knowledge of a magistrate’s office and duties, according to the country’s laws, does not warrant me to set up myself or my neighbour as a magistrate; but, far from being useless, it may, in a day of difficulty, be the means of preserving others besides myself from owning those who claim to be in the commission of the peace without the necessary authorization (i.e., in fact, from rebellion).

There is a third lesson of great practical value deducible even from the special instructions in the pastoral epistles, where there was no apostle nor apostolic man to appoint local functionaries. They, clearly state the qualities spiritual, moral, and even circumstantial, required in bishops or elders. The possession of them all, however unquestionable, would not in my judgment warrant a man to call himself an elder or bishop, nor another who was not duly authorized, nor the assembly so to call him: but it would be the strongest ground, where due ordination could not be had, for all godly-minded saints to be subject to such, to recognize them as labouring and taking the lead among brethren in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. “Obey your rulers (or leaders, chief men, τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν), and submit yourselves,” would

thus apply to the conscience wherever such men watched over their souls in the fear of God, though no apostle or apostolic delegate had ever penetrated there.

This may suffice for the argument drawn from the pastoral epistles. A wise opponent would have carefully retired from that field. For it is the part of God's oracles which sentences to death ordinary ministerial appointment, as hopelessly as 1 Corinthians exposes the actual departure of Christians from God's order for the assembly, and from the principle and exercise of gifts in it. (1 Cor. 12, 1 Cor. 14.) Do they so much as think of their indifference to these things?

It is strange that such an effusion should pass muster with a staff of (I hope) grave, godly, and educated, if not learned, men.

As to the remarks in the rest of page 901, it is due neither to the writer nor to myself, still less to the Master, that I should dwell on such improprieties. "To our view, his 'Fundamental Truths' are so many fundamental errors. It would be easy to demonstrate, had we space for it, that he is wrong, most egregiously wrong, upon every one of his points. He may well be afraid of mathematics. By his method we would undertake to prove anything whatever out of the Bible," etc. Uninstructed minds are apt to over-estimate their own powers and attainments; but such a specimen of self-confidence, with so little bottom for it, one rarely meets with. There is no man possessed of a fair knowledge of Scripture who does not hold with me, that God's word is sometimes explicit, sometimes not, and that only unbelief doubts its preciousness in either case. Let any instance be produced where explicitness was

predicated of it or denied to it wrongly (both of which errors might easily be made by anyone): if I have been guilty in this respect, show it like an honest man; if not, confess that “the true sectarian style” is on the part of those who can thus prate maliciously at random. It is no enviable strong-mindedness which can do without God’s word, or which feels not the precious wisdom of its utterances and even of its silence. To the believer all is perfect and instructive: but all men have not faith, and to such every expression of spiritual enjoyment is offensive and suspicious. Habitually acting without Scripture, they must keep up the courage of those subject to their influence, and so run down our pressure of subjection to Scripture, as the Papists do, by undertaking after our method “to prove anything whatever out of the Bible.” Need I say that they prove nothing beyond their own evil eye and self-sufficiency? With every desire to avoid a style so unbecoming, let us pass on to page 902 where the writer recurs to the supposed error of believing that the Church of God, Christ’s body, began after the ascension of our Lord and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Now we do not “assume” but produce the amplest testimony of scripture that the Spirit’s baptism of believing Jews and Gentiles into one body, the body of Christ, did not exist before the middle-wall of partition was broken down by the cross of Christ and the Holy Spirit was sent down to unite the members to Him and to each other. It is this state of union with a glorified Head which is not found in the Old Testament. On the contrary, by God’s law the Jew (believer or not) was peremptorily, in every detail of walk and worship, separated from the Gentile (believer or not). Nay, even during our Lord’s ministry here below, the same separation was, as a rule, maintained when He sent out

the twelve to preach over the land of Israel (Matt. 10: 5, 6). After His resurrection He gives His disciples a world-wide commission to all the Gentiles; and in due time the Holy Ghost came down baptizing both Jew and Gentile into one body, one new man. Thus and then was revealed that mystery hid previously in God, now made known to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. Such is the Church of God, Christ's body. Not a syllable in 1 Corinthians 10 intimates that the Old Testament fathers were members of it. Nobody denies that believers among them were saints, looking for Christ and regenerate of the Spirit; but where are they called Christ's body, or said to be baptized by the Holy Ghost? The writer does not see that there may be many blessings common to the faithful at all times, and a new corporation formed from among the redeemed within given limits for the glory of God. This cannot be determined à priori or on vague general grounds. It would be wiser to weigh the alleged proofs, and above all the Scriptures. Indeed it is a more logical inference from 1 Corinthians 10 that the Jewish fathers could not have essential identity with us, because the apostle says these things happened as "types" of us. For a type suggests resemblance, and not, as he contends, identity with the antitype.

So Hebrews 11, to which he next appeals (p. 902), concludes with a verse remarkably adverse to the notion that they and we form one body; for the words he cites expressly teach that God has provided a better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Instead of being perfected in resurrection glory, when the Lord came and wrought redemption, they had to wait for us who are called to partake of the heavenly

calling. (Chap. 3) When we have all got our" better thing," they will be perfected (not apart from but) with us. That is, the verse teaches with equal distinctness that God has foreseen some better thing as to us, and that we and they are to be perfected together; but not a trace appears of the union of them and us in one body. Hebrews 12:23 distinguishes between the spirits of just men made perfect (the Old Testament saints), and the church of the firstborn.

Again, if Stephen treats of Moses being ἐν τῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ with the angel that spoke to him in Mount Sinai and the fathers, Pearson and Alford will, with the "Brethren," correct his error, and tell him that it was the assembly of Israel in the wilderness, not the one body of believing Jews and Gentiles. Will he be bold enough to say that the Bishop and the Dean were "utterly obfuscated by their sectarian theory?" He ought to be more cautious, and not scandalize his evangelical magazine by abusing too strongly men far more instructed and able than himself, when letting out against the "Plymouth Brethren."4 It is to be presumed that some of its readers are decently acquainted with common Anglican divinity.

Nor does the writer perceive that the argument here surrenders the citadel. Christ, says he, "as 'the angel of the covenant' was in the Church in the wilderness,' as Stephen says (Acts 7:38), before He actually became its human Head, because His incarnation was an anticipated fact in the divine purposes. He existed in posse before he existed in esse, as the logicians say." (P. 903.) This bit of logic is unfortunate. For Scripture speaks of the Church as the πλήρωμα or complement of Christ, never of the glorified Head as the fulness of the Church. It is our point in opposition to the Christian

Observer that Christ's headship of the Church was only in posse, not yet in esse till the basis not of incarnation only but of redemption. It is now confessed that it was not in esse. This is a fatal admission: for that which wants a head is not a body but a trunk or a monster. Scripture never speaks of the body before the head but rather as following it. Thus, Ephesians 1 tells us God raised up Christ from the dead and set Him in heaven, "and gave him to be head over all things to the church which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." So the figure of the building in Ephesians 2 where Christians are said to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. Was the building begun before the foundation was laid? Our question is one of fact, not of the counsels of God, who of course sees the end from the beginning. Were the question about the existence of Adam and Eve (who set forth the mystery as to Christ and the Church), what would be thought of the argument that Adam and therefore Eve existed in posse in the dust of the ground on the fifth day?

Again, there is nothing about that one body, the Church, in Hebrews 13:8, or in Matthew 21:43. One text speaks of the unchangeableness of "Jesus Christ;" the other intimates the rejection of "that generation" which refused Him, and the passing of God's kingdom to a nation producing the fruits of it. What has either to do with the question whether those before and after Christ form one and the same body? This is not reasoning, still less Scripture; but a mere popular notion without Scripture as to those before Christ, and against Scripture as to those since Christ. It is a tradition, founded on grounds which real scholars of his own and

all parties explode as untenable. Indeed any Christian can judge for himself.

The motive too which he imputes (pp. 902, 903) is his own fancy, and contrary to all our thoughts and words. If he in the least understood our principles, he would see that to constitute a peculiar church of ours is quite foreign to us. We object to making a church, as much as to the churches, so-called, other men have made. We insist on the truth that God made, and intended there should be according to His blessed will and word, but one Church — not, of course, denying any number of assemblies locally severed, but all Christians forming one assembly, the assembly here on earth; all enjoying one Head above and one Spirit below; all joined into one body, so that a member of Christ should be a member of the assembly everywhere; and similarly His gifts of ministry. (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4.) Such was the fact in apostolic times: Scripture recognizes no other doctrine or practice. “Brethren” only recall believers to the Church God has made, of which they and we are already members, and entreat them to cast away the worn and soiled clouts as well as the new fashions of human texture, and to cleave simply to what is of God’s word and Spirit.

Next, we come once more to 1 Corinthians and the Christian Observer’s never failing misstatement as to both Scripture and ourselves. 1. It is not true that this is “the stronghold of ‘the Brethren.’“ Of course, we believe it to have divine authority over us and all Christians; and it is ridiculous to evade the fact that we are really seeking, cost what it may, to act on it, and that our brethren, Anglican and Dissenting, are not. All Scripture, nothing less, is our stronghold.

2. It is not true that, “because they find at the beginning of this the expression, ‘the church of God which is at Corinth,’ they conclude that that, as set in order by the apostle, must have been intended to be a pattern church.” We see and say that there is admirable harmony between the address and the contents of the epistle; but we conclude that it is the most largely ecclesiastical, and therefore the most instructive on such matters, from the plain fact (deny it who can?), that it enters into questions of the sort, not only more than any other epistle, but more than all other epistles put together. At Corinth the spirit of schism and party displayed itself early. (1 Cor. 1.) Here the wisdom of the world soon claimed to adorn the doctrine of the cross. (1 Cor. 2.) Here schools of doctrine quickly found mutually opposed votaries. (1 Cor. 3.) Here apostolic authority was widely despised for teachers who allowed the world and flattered the flesh. (1 Cor. 4.) - Here gross practical evil was winked at, as if the christian assembly were not competent and responsible to put away known evildoers. (1 Cor. 5.) Here was seen readiness to neglect brotherly arbitration for the world’s decisions, forgetting the grace of rather suffering wrong than compromising the love and glory of Christ; here too moral laxity was an especial snare. (1 Cor. 6.) Here difficulties as to marriage, as to the unmarried, as to widows, and as to slaves, required solution. (1 Cor. 7.) Here questions of communion and conscience as to idols, temples, and things sacrificed, demanded an answer, and his own ministry to be vindicated, however he might have waived its rights; for such was his joy and glory. (1 Cor. 8, 1 Cor. 9, 1 Cor. 10.) Here the order as to women, even in points of external decorum, had to be laid down; and also the right mode of celebrating the Eucharist is given.

(1 Cor. 11) Here the operation of the Holy Ghost with a view to the common profit of the assembly had to be explained; and this, not in view of any local need only but of the Church as such everywhere on earth; for it was not in any one church but in the christian assembly as a whole that God set, first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healing, etc. (1 Cor. 12.) There too after the sweet episode on love in 1 Cor. 13. (how needful in such things!), the apostle had to regulate the exercise of the manifestations of the Spirit, especially for the assembly when they came together. (1 Cor. 14.) Again, after the assertion of resurrection against gainsayers as a foundation truth — not merely the soul's immortality but the rising of the dead (1 Cor. 15.), he lays down the general principle and method of collections for the poor saints, and treats of the various ways of divine grace in the service of Christ here below. (1 Cor. 16.) I have but sketched the salient features, as the chapters pass before the mind's eye: but where can one match these inimitable church canons? Still none that knows the value of what is "written again" thinks of making any spot the stronghold, or any church exclusively a pattern church. There is not even the shadow of an excuse for either misrepresentation. What can one think of a man who, when his mistake is corrected and contradicted, simply repeats it without a word or fact adduced as an excuse for his obstinacy?

3. Who ever dreamt that "the Church of God was to be found only at Corinth, because this expression is used" in the address? Nobody but the Christian Observer in its rash efforts against the "Brethren."

4. It is not a gratuitous assumption but a necessary consequence of the inspired character of 1 Corinthians, that “what is there written respecting the Church” is obligatory on every assembly which claims to be on the ground of God’s Church. Human churches may take or leave what they like, or do not like, out of this or any other epistle. How striking it is that the very address of this epistle, from which they try to escape (sometimes under the subtle excuse of their deference to other epistles or churches!), is not merely to the Church of God at Corinth, to the sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, but “with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.”

5. Is it honest to say that “the apostle speaks of several things as exceptional, or only of temporary purpose?” This may be convenient to a defender of present things in Christendom; but why not specify? It is true that the apostle corrects their mingling of a feast with the Lord’s Supper; but if he enjoins anything exceptional or temporary, why not say what? If the allusion be to miracles, tongues, etc., it seems to me unworthy of a grave man. His directions as to these things abide, just as his injunctions to a Timothy or a Titus. If such powers exist at any time, they must submit to the apostolic order; and if any man have the authority from God of a Timothy or a Titus, they can appoint and govern as their predecessors did — nay, they are bound so to do. But there seems rather more care taken to assert the general value and authority ecclesiastically of 1 Corinthians than of any other epistle, if one may judge from such passages as chapter 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Cor. 7:17; 1 Cor. 11:16; 1 Cor. 14:37. Does not this peculiar provision seem meant to guard souls from that

prevalent unbelief of which the Christian Observer is here the exponent?

6. “And if that Church were designed to be made the model for all Churches, in all countries, and in all ages, the epistle to it ought obviously to have been the very first epistle St. Paul wrote. But the First Epistle to the Church of the Thessalonians at least is of earlier date; so is that to the Galatians; and that to the Romans is coeval if not somewhat earlier.” The argument has no force, laying aside the irreverence of dictating to God the order in which He ought to reveal His truth, which lies at the bottom of it. But, in fact, no objection can be more worthless. For there is evident propriety in the Epistles to the Thessalonians taking the priority in time of all others. They develop christian life in its fresh simplicity and in its capital elements of faith, hope, and love, though correcting specially certain errors into which they fell or were misled in the great article of our hope, and insisting on the moral duties which suit that hope, instead of being incompatible with it, as some vainly supposed. There is no niche which these epistles could so well fill as that in which the Spirit of God was in fact pleased to put them — an initiatory instruction and exhortation to an infant assembly. The date of Galatians is the least ascertainable of all Paul’s epistles, some making it first, some last, and many viewing it as intermediate. There is no sufficient reason to postpone it till the apostle’s visit to Rome, as the legendary subscription in the common Bible does, followed by not a few names of weight. I do not even contend for its being so late as the Epistle to the Romans, which was certainly written at Corinth long before he saw Rome, but after the First Epistle to the Corinthians was written

from Ephesus, and even after the second was written somewhere in Macedonia, before his stay of three months in Greece, when and whence he wrote to the Romans. But, supposing that the Epistle to the Galatians could be proved to be anterior to 1 Corinthians, contrary to the recent investigation of Prof. Lightfoot, what would be the value of the argument? Who can fail to see that to deliver saints from abandoning grace for the law (which is the point in Galatians) is an individual appeal of the most urgent personal importance, and therefore might well precede the laying down of the divine will as to corporate privileges and responsibilities? But the truth is, that the measure of uncertainty which hangs over the place and time of writing to the Galatians suits exactly. The aim was their recovery from a lapse into Judaising, which might have been either before or after or along with 1 Corinthians. But the Epistle to the Romans was assuredly written in Corinth during the apostle's brief stay in Achaia, after both Epistles to the Corinthians were written and despatched. The Christian Observer therefore is all abroad in the alleged facts: but had these even been correct, the desired conclusion would not follow.

In a former reply it has been already shown that a model place is not given to the Corinthian assembly more than to any other which the apostle planted or wrote to. We go on the broad ground that the same substantial principles were in force everywhere, that all the assemblies of God recognized the same fundamental truths as to communion, the same exercise of gifts and discipline, the same administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper:- all this because the Church is one body, the habitation of God through the Spirit. Scripture is

fatal to the present condition of Christendom. Our critic somehow must get rid of the authority that condemns it all. Is not this the aim of the following remarks? “The apostle of the Gentiles seems to have had no idea of conforming the churches, as established in different countries, among people of different habits, to exactly the same type. That would have been Judaism indeed. There is a certain pliancy in Christianity in this respect. The churches planted by the apostles were, so far as we can discover, differently endowed as to gifts, and so they had prescribed for them different rules of action. (!) The Plymouthites admit that the age of miracles has passed away, so far as the supply of ‘apostles and prophets’ is concerned. By what kind of logic, then, can they contend for its permanence in the supply of ‘evangelists, pastors, and teachers?’ If the Plymouth Brethren can exhibit the miraculous gifts possessed by the Corinthian Christians, we, for our part, will not object to their acting by the same rules; but to enforce the rules for their exercise, where the gifts do not exist, would be obviously Pharisaic and foolish. The laws of the first creation of the world were exceptional: the laws of its continued existence are fixed and uniform. Is not the same true of the Church?” (Pp. 903, 904.) Now it is no question of detail, nor of the presence of this or that particular gift in this or that particular assembly. The truth is, not that Brethren contend for some one out of the scriptural churches as a model (for we are convinced that they were all essentially alike as to constitution, the Church in fact), but that our adversaries want no model whatever from Scripture. And no wonder.

I utterly deny the ground of the reasoning. Differences in the measure of supply, varying displays of power,

there were in apostolic days, yet there was one divine system which then pervaded the entire christian profession, founded not only on a common relationship to Christ but on the presence and operations of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. This then is the true question: Does that relationship still subsist for faith to act on? Is that divine Person still present here below to guide those who desire the honour of Christ in obeying God's word? Let others gainsay not only that it remains but that it ever was true, and thus in vain deny their responsibility and their guilt. May "Brethren" in their weakness have grace to hold fast the word of the Lord and not deny His name! It is not true that all the gifts described in 1 Corinthians are gone, because miracles and tongues are no longer. Does the Christian Observer doubt that God any longer sets in the Church teachers (1 Cor. 12.)? That He still makes His presence felt in His assembly (1. Cor. 14.)? There have been Anglican bishops and archbishops who, spite of their system, fully allowed that the prophetic (not predictive) gift is not extinct, and who yearned and contended for the liberty of exercising it; and this on the same ground of 1 Corinthians 14. as "Brethren" take. So far is this chapter from being limited to miraculous displays, that the apostle forbids the exercise of a tongue unless some one could interpret it for the edification of the assembly. Such was the grand aim of all — common edification, and this in order and decency. But the order is that of the christian assembly open to the action of the Holy Ghost through its members — an order undoubtedly believed in and acted on by "Brethren." Will the Christian Observer dare to say it is obsolete? Will they say that no gifts, not even teachers, exist, because tongues, etc., are passed away? "Laws of creation" is

mere clap-trap which can only mislead. God created all things by the Son, by whom too all things subsist. He formed the christian assembly which can never depart from His word given to regulate it, save sinfully.

It is true that it was pre-eminently Paul's province to lay down the authoritative regulation of these matters; but God took care to affirm precisely identical principles by the great apostle of the circumcision. So we read in 1 Peter 4:10, 11, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." This unquestionably supposes the most absolute openness for the Spirit's action in the free working of every gift from the Lord. Not even an apostle, still less the elders or bishops, thought of silencing the lesser gifts. There was room for all, great and small. Nor were gifted men merely at liberty to employ what was given them for the good of souls; they were bound to minister to one another, as good stewards of God's various grace. Otherwise God would not be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. Flesh might take advantage of this; but no human restriction can afford a remedy: on the contrary it aggravates this evil, introduces others, and in itself outrages God's revealed will. The trite guard lies in the conscience exercised before Him and subject to His word. Hence the exhortation of James (James 3:1), "My brethren, be not many masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive greater judgment." The abuse of gift was in no way

peculiar to Corinth, but the very abuse, whether in one place or another, demonstrates what was the sanctioned principle of God which required the warning, and this where no sign-gift is spoken of, but only such a gift as abides still for the edification of Christ's body. If indeed the Christian Observer's view is that no such gifts as evangelists, pastors, and teachers, are still given by the Lord, if they are obliged to substitute for them the scanty mathematical or classical lore possessed by the ordinary graduates of a university, and the common-places of divinity required by an examining chaplain, one can understand that much of Scripture ceases to apply either in principle or in practice. It is for the believer to judge between us and our adversaries. We hold that' every spiritual gift needed to call in souls and build them up is still provided by our living Head; and consequently that the Scriptures which treat of this subject are as applicable and binding as in the day they were written. Whose logic is at fault? Whose principles make Scripture a dead letter?

It is remarkable that the principle for which men now contend was anticipated by the Corinthians, and is for ever condemned in this very chapter 14 of the first epistle. The Corinthian brethren also wished a certain "pliancy" in their church. They saw that some of their females were endowed with gifts. Why should people of habits so different from those in Judea, or proconsular Asia, be conformed to exactly the same type? "That would have been Judaism indeed." Surely the apostle of the Gentiles had no idea of conforming all in different countries to the same model! Has not the church power to decree rites and ceremonies? has it not authority in controversies of faith? The apostle of the Gentiles does

pronounce on the case, but it is to put down with peremptory hand this licentious self-will which forgets that the Church, even on earth and though composed of living men, is a divine institution, and cannot be altered in its landmarks without rebellion. Did they contend for tongues in the assembly? Did they come together every one full of his own contribution? Did they prophesy ever so many on the same occasion? Did they allow women to speak in the assembly? These were abuses of christian liberty in the assembly, which must be subject to apostolic ordinance, instead of arrogating the title to please itself according to race, age, or country. “What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? 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. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.” This is the alternative for the Christian Observer as well as for ourselves. Which of us owns and seeks subjection to the things the apostle of the Gentiles wrote to the Corinthians? Which of us contends for leave to give up this very portion of Scripture as of present obligation? Which of us seeks to originate methods of our own as the Corinthians did? Which of us insists that the word of God comes to us only (not from us as “a certain pliancy” would imply)?

As for the notion that it is illogical to contend for the permanent supply of evangelists, pastors, and teachers, if apostles and prophets be not now vouchsafed, I can only stand amazed at the extent of these men’s incredulity as well as ignorance. Are they so far gone as to think that we must have either all the gifts the ascended Christ conferred on the Church at first, or

none? Had we the miraculous sign-gifts of those early days, 1 Corinthians 14 forbids their exercise save under peculiar circumstances in the assembly; whereas the edification-gifts were exactly in place and season there. Does this writer believe that we have no edification-gifts now? no evangelists, pastors, teachers? or will he boldly take the other side and claim the continued supply of apostles and prophets too? Nothing is simpler than that the Lord does not furnish gifts to lay the foundation when the foundation is laid; but that He in faithful love continues all gifts needed to build up the saints "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. 4:13.) If these divine gifts exist (as we believe) among all Christians, Anglicans, Dissenters, as well as ourselves, is it Pharisaic and foolish to enforce the divine rules? Is it not Corinthianism to seek other rules or no rules at all?

Next, as to Calvin's note on 1 Corinthians 1:21 (p. 904), so far from being opposed to our views, few brethren have taught or commented on this epistle, as on others, without similar reflections. God is long-suffering and faithful; but a real assembly of His may be distracted by countless elements of sin, shame, and sorrow. The Christian Observer does not understand our aim, nor does Calvin touch the point. Since Catholicism swamped Christendom, which then broke out into the rival systems of the east and west, there has been no gathering of God's children in the power of the Spirit to the name of the Lord as their true and everlasting centre. on earth. The Reformation, which did so much for putting man in presence of God's word and proclaimed justification by faith, did not clear from the

rubbish of ages the revealed truth as to the Church, ministry, worship, etc. On the contrary, it embarrassed the, ecclesiastical difficulty by giving rise to national churches, each with its own peculiar system of government, ministry, and discipline, independent and co-ordinate. This was pushed out yet farther by the non-conformists at home and abroad who claimed the title to frame churches of their own. Thus, the result was (not the Church of God on earth, one body, energized by one Spirit, with local assemblies doubtless, but the members and ministers in the unity of Christ's body, but) distinct bodies, Roman Catholic or Greek, National or Dissenting, with no proper intercommunion, only occasional or by courtesy, but contrariwise membership and ministry in a church, so that to be a member or minister of one is incompatible with belonging to another. What people call Plymouth Brethrenism is the recall of Christians to the original state of things in its essential features, as of eternal obligation and the only groundwork truly divine. We leave it with God to give this re-assertion of the Church according to Scripture that measure of acceptance which seems good in His eyes; but whether we convince others or not, our own duty remains clear, as it is our joy and, we believe, both glorifying to God and profitable to His children.

It is curious, however, that the Christian Observer omits in its citation the pith of Calvin's answer to the question what appearance of a church was any longer presented in Corinth. Let me supply his words, "Respondeo: Quum illi dictum esset a Domino, Ne timeas, populus hic mihi multus est (Act. 18:9): hujus promissionis memorem id honoris paucis bonis detulisse, ut Ecclesiam agnosceret in magna improborum multitudine. Deinde," etc. The

Lord's word that He had much people in that city sustained his hopes spite of appearances. Now, although satisfied Calvin did not seize the truth of Scripture as to much, any more than other great and good men of that day, yet I do not dissent from his conclusion that the true assembly of God in any place may be painfully afflicted with all sorts of evil in the members. 1 Corinthians 5 is explicit, as are other Scriptures, that it is not the amount of sin that may enter or spring up in the midst, but the refusal to judge, and the consequent sanction given to evil there which destroys the corporate title of the Church as God's witness here below.

The reader may gather hence how little either the Donatists or the Plymouth Brethren so-called are understood, classed as they are here together. "They are attempting what the Donatists attempted in the first century." (p. 904.) This at least is a discovery! I had been content to know with less pretentious students of ecclesiastical history, that the squabble about the election of Caecilianus (A.D. 311) is the earliest point to which we could look as giving occasion for that famous rent in Africa. From the works of Optatus and Augustine I had learnt nearly all that can be ascertained about that turbulent faction. It seemed to be far more a question of discipline than of doctrine if not of party opposition, the Numidian bishops being piqued that they had no part as usual in the election. Felix, bishop of Apthunga, who ordained the new bishop of Carthage, was said to be a traditor during the persecution of Dioclesian, and Caecilianus himself also was accused of ill conduct at that time. The elder Donatus who took part in the election of Majorinus, the bishop of the seceders, was the bishop of Casae Nigrae of that day; the greater one,

who seems to have given the name of Donatists to the party, was successor of Majorinus. Spite of a fierce persecution, which Augustine palliated in the hope that it would be good for their souls, they appear to have gone on sometimes flourishing, and sometimes depressed, till Mohammedanism extinguished both them and the Catholics. Insisting on the rebaptism of all whom they received from their adversaries and refusing all communion save to such as absolutely broke off spiritual connection with others, they differed essentially from the so-called Plymouth Brethren. For we believe, that no ecclesiastical mistake, however grave in itself, calls for such stringent measures, and that extremities ought to be reserved for those who bring not the doctrine of Christ or connive at Antichrist.

But there is another discovery as to Scripture which rivals the Christian Observer's sight of the Donatists in the first century, and this in the very next sentence of the same paragraph. (p. 904.) "It is as clear as anything can be, that there never was 'the one body' in the sense the Plymouth Brethren would put upon the words, that is, a church consisting exclusively of true saints (?) in perfect unity one with another (?) since the day that the three thousand, along with the previous hundred and twenty true disciples, assembled with one accord at Jerusalem, and had all things common. The Corinthian Church certainly exhibited the reverse of this: and indeed, in all the apostolic churches, as described in the epistles, we find precisely the same evils, more or less, and still greater moral evils prevailing, than can be found now in any community of Christians. Are there no similar evils, even among 'the Brethren' themselves, with all their pretensions to oneness and to exclusive

purity?" (Pp. 904, 905.), I know not how godly Anglicans relish such remarks as these on the dead as well as the living; but I avow that a lower tone of spiritual judgment it has rarely been my pain to meet with. Defamation of the apostolic church seems natural to those who apologise for Christendom as it is, and dislike the testimony to their own departure from God's word. Here every statement, every notion, is false. The sense said to be put on the words "the one body" is never given by us. We do say that none were received who were not accredited as "true saints;" but we always allow that our brethren of old, like ourselves now, were liable to be imposed on for a time by deceivers or self-deceivers. Such, however, are apt to fall soon into evil of word or deed, were they as clever as Simon Magus, and thus bring themselves by their manifest iniquity under the discipline of the Church. Next, it is a strange deduction from our writings to infer that our sense of the one body supposes not only the Church to consist of none but true saints, but these " in perfect unity one with another," since the same writer pretends that we count the Corinthians to have been the model for all churches. For the first evil denounced in the first epistle is their schismatical state, which forced the apostle to exhort them to be perfectly united in the same mind, just because they were not. Yet there are throughout more frequent implications that they belonged to "the one body" than in any other epistle; though, of course, the fact that such was their privilege is as often urged to correct their practical short-coming. See especially 1 Corinthians 10:16-21; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. I do not hide for a moment the extent to which unwatchfulness exposed the inexperienced Corinthian assembly to gross evil, the remains of old heathen habits, or the effect of

wondrous power at work among souls so little used to walk in self-judgment and the conscious presence of God. But there is about as much truth or right feeling in the odious comparison of that church with modern communions to the advantage of the latter, as if it were said that the apostles Peter and Paul were not quite so respectable ministers as the modern clergymen of Nationalism or Dissent. The essential thing to remember is that the Corinthians had been really gathered according to God; and though Satan brought in exceeding mischief, still they were in a position and free to use divine remedies according to His word, neither of which features is true of modern communities.

As to the attack on ourselves, in the rest of the article (pp. 905-913), it is not for us to speak in self-vindication. We can trust God and are not careful to answer such charges; and the rather, as it is evident the writer knows scarcely anything about us. Others will and ought to look more to the realities of things, judged by Scripture, than to the thoughts and feelings either of ourselves or of our accusers. Mere vituperation has no force save for the weak and worthless; rarely is it the servant of a good cause. The question of Christendom is with the revealed word, rather than with those who cannot depart from that word knowingly, save at the peril of the soul and in opposition to God Himself. No dissenter who knows us will admit that we have their common, still less a special, dislike of the English Establishment. But, again, “Brethren,” to maintain their position, “give us a new version of the scriptures under the title of a ‘Synopsis of the Books of the Bible,’ which is their ‘Douay Version.’“ (p. 905.) Mark the trustworthiness of the Christian Observer in common matters before all eyes.

The writer must speak at random of what he cannot have examined, if he ever touched the works alluded to. For the fact is that the “Synopsis” is not in any sense a version of the Bible, though its author has also translated the Greek Testament into German and French as well as English. But the most learned men of the English Establishment have recorded their judgment of this English translation, which one of them, inferior as a textual critic to none in this country, recommended to his divinity classes. The writer can know neither the “Synopsis” nor the version; else he could not have confounded them, nor have foolishly sneered at either, as “their Douai version.” Also, the “daring dogmatism” of describing the aim and object of each book of Scripture, is just what every annotator and every expounder does every day. The only question is, whether the work be done with spiritual insight, accuracy, and comprehensiveness. It requires no great penetration to see that the Epistle to the Romans, for instance, is not addressed to the assembly as such, but to the saints at Rome (i.e., in their individual standing) and hence, as in Romans 8, brings out their position very fully as “children” and heirs of God. 1 Corinthians, as we have seen, is far more ecclesiastical. He who denounces such self-evident facts as to these epistles may not be a dogmatist nor write mistily; but certainly he must dwell in a land of Egyptian darkness. Would he fain condemn us to the intolerant yoke of his own dullness?

Of the three anecdotes next given to illustrate the spirit of the “Brethren,” I know that the two public ones are not stated truthfully. May one ask if the private case is any better? Is a monstrous tale against well and long known servants of God to be received because it is evil,

though none among those acquainted with the facts feels the least need of contradicting it? Trashy scandal neither deserves nor needs notice, though some have a natural liking for it. Further, I never knew any “Brother” object to join in family worship conducted by Christians in a Christian manner. And I am perfectly sure that separating the wife from the husband, save for reasons which all Christians would hold as decisive, would never be tolerated in our midst. We have no controversy with our brethren as to such matters; and no man or woman guilty of such shameful impropriety would be allowed a place in fellowship. What can one think then of statements so reckless? or of those who deign to employ them for party or any other ends?

As to our “essentially schismatical and sectarian spirit” (pp. 906, 907), we have suffered not a little in vain, if we do not utterly condemn it, fruit, branch, and root. But how is it schismatical to abandon all schisms, whether national or dissenting, in order to recur to the original and constitutive principles of God’s Church? Is this what the apostle denounces in Rom. 16:17, 18? Is the Christian Observer a true witness or a false?

It is observable too that, in excusing their own intolerance of our refusal to join in ways which we are sure are unscriptural, the Christian Observer avows its gross latitudinarianism. To us it is no matter of opinion but of faith to worship God as the apostolic church was called to do in holy writings still vouchsafed and obligatory. It is not charity to give up conscience, or to allow self-will, but this is the love of God that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous. To talk about the wise and good of all generations is idle and false; seeing that every wise and

good man knows that the original church action and worship have been abandoned for many ages in Christendom, and that the best and wisest of the reformers (e.g., those who laid the present basis of the greater Protestant bodies) owned how far short they fell of the primitive standing, and that many of them then and since contested these questions hotly with one another. There are ever so many different modes of worship in Christendom, which may all be wrong but cannot more than one be right. Why this rancour? Is it not fear or hatred of the truth that condemns them? "Brethren" felt that there was no use in owning one thing and doing another, and therefore necessarily left what was wrong in order to do the right thing according to Scripture. The Pharisees did not leave the religion of the day, but gave themselves proud airs at no cost in it. Would it have been more righteous or charitable to have gone on, owning our common defection from scriptural duties, but yet persisting in that which we believed to be sinful? This seems precisely what the Christian Observer thinks a more desirable course. Let christian conscience judge. We have learned that we ought to cease to do evil and learn to do well; and of course where such matters come before us, we lay this as an evident duty on all who see that they are in a false position but are disposed to tamper with a good conscience by remaining in it. Where is the "sectarian spirit," save in those who take fire at this?

I do firmly and openly tell all these defenders of Christendom against the authority of Scripture and the rights of the Holy Ghost, that God's glory is and should be the aim of the Christian, and not only the salvation of souls.5 I tell them that in vain they worship Him,

teaching for doctrine the commandments and notions and practices of men. I tell them that for christian men it is of the utmost moment both for His glory and the good of themselves and their brethren that they should recognize and follow His will, as about other things, so about His assembly; for they are members of it, and so much the greater is their condemnation if they (through tradition, prejudice, haste, or any other cause) neglect that which so intimately concerns both Him and them. He who truly believes in the Saviour but does not understand the assembly of God, or his own responsibility in respect of it, will not be lost; but the man who treats a matter which runs through a vast part of the New Testament so lightly as to class it with "foolish and unlearned questions," is bolder than one ought to be with the divine truth he does not see, as he will learn to his cost in the day that is fast approaching.

Do the readers of the Christian Observer think that its managers will damage any but themselves by citing 1 Timothy 6:4, as if it applied specially to those they call "Plymouth Brethren?" I admit it is as close to or as wide of the mark as the rest of their diatribe; but it must be manifest to unbiassed men in their own community, that this sort of thing is mere rant. The apostle was denouncing those who sought to make slaves discontented with their masters, especially believing masters. Are "Brethren" men destitute of the truth who suppose that piety is gain? Others there are, most will allow, who lay themselves rather more open to the appearance of using religion and its service as a means of worldly advantage.

Among our logomachies they class objections made to the character of the English Liturgy, to language which

confounds the believer's need of forgiveness day by day with the unbeliever's need of remission through the blood of Christ; and, above all, to expressions which cloud the great truth of the Spirit given to all Christians, with desires after greater power of the Spirit. I pity those who count these "foolish questions;" but our objections go much farther than any phraseology however beneath christian privilege.

But when it is next said that "they confound atonement with pardon on the conditions of repentance and faith, and make faith a mere assent of the mind to a fact," etc. (page 208), they assert what is directly opposed to truth. This, I should judge, was gathered out of a Methodist preacher's attack, or in article in a Wesleyan organ founded on it. Let me tell them that, without boasting of our knowledge, I do not believe they will produce one man, woman, or child among us guilty of that confusion which they so inconsiderately impute to us as a class; and that no man holding the Sandemanian or Walkerite doctrine, which reduces faith to a mere mental assent, would be knowingly received amongst us. We hold universally that faith is the soul's reception of a divine testimony by the effectual operation of the Holy Ghost.

Again, the Christian Observer must be strangely uninformed of the sentiments of Christians in general, if they do not know that some of the best and ablest men among the Evangelical clergy repudiate the mingling of Christ's legal obedience during His life with the ground of justification. We all agree that Christ obeyed the law perfectly, and that this was needful to vindicate God who gave it; but it is infatuation to think that this proves His law-keeping to be the very basis of the merit of His death as our substitute. These men, like others, are

feeble in their apprehension of the divine judgment of sin and sins in the cross. The union of the divine and human natures in Christ's person, His sinless life, His obedience, were all necessary to redemption. The true question is, by what was atonement wrought? With what does Scripture connect our justification?

"Brethren" know nothing of imputed sanctification, which would really deserve the sneer which J. Wesley cast on imputed righteousness. It is false that such is our doctrine. Every man who knows ourselves or our teaching in any moderate degree, must confess that we insist on a holy walk, as Paul does, because we are under grace, not law. It needs no argument to see that "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh" does not mean daily practice but the ground of it. Really the Christian Observer's grammar is very peculiar, not to speak of the doctrine. Do they not know that the aorist implies a single act, as opposed to what is continuous; or a completed act, as opposed to what is in progress? I do say that Galatians 5:24 speaks of what is "done already;" and I defy any man to prove otherwise. Other Scriptures teach a process going on, but not this passage.

If the Christian Observer stands to this, there are more intelligent clergy and laymen who will join with those they blame. It is not a question of substitution alone, but of imparting a real life to the believer, everlasting life in Christ; so that they, possessed of that very life in Him, are called now to walk in the Spirit according to the characteristics of His life in whose cross the flesh, with all its activities and issues, was judged. Is this religion made easy? Ignorance of Christ and the cross may so deem it, but nothing else can. Life is not a question of imputation but of impartation; and the believer,

accounted righteous, has also life in Christ. This will show how far men are to be trusted (is it want of common understanding or honesty?) who talk of imputed sanctification as the doctrine of the Plymouth Teachers. It is only the misapprehension of the writer. We hold that the believer is sanctified through the offering of Christ's body once for all, and that, besides, he has to pursue peace and holiness (or sanctification) without which none shall see the Lord. What, then, means this senseless outcry?6 — It is unquestionably false witness, which is even more conspicuous in the next paragraph; where a "subtle and specious heresy," "very pernicious errors," "Satan's snares," "angel of light," open the way to a wholesale application of 2 Timothy 3 against us. Now is it not remarkable that the provision of the apostle against the perils of the last days (which is the real aim of the passage, and of evident bearing on that assumption which is so apt to impose on the morbid, especially on the weaker vessel) is precisely what "Brethren" everywhere press — the value of every written word of God?

I do not deprecate the violence of the Christian Observer, nor should I tax them with "uncharitableness" if their assaults were founded on God's truth. But they falsely accuse us of desiring or allowing liberty to the flesh, which is incompatible with giving due place to the Spirit and word of God, but may and does co-exist well with human ordinances, ecclesiastical creeds, and worldly plans of government, substituted for God's system of His Church. But they betray themselves in the next breath; for after asserting in page 907 their large allowance for differences in modes of worship as well as in opinion, in other communions, so long as all things

are done in charity, they maintain in page 911 that "separation from a church like that happily established in this land.... is nothing less than needless schism." This blind self-complacency in their own religious system (at an hour when its powerlessness to deal with Infidelity, Popery, not to speak of heterodoxy and wickedness of the gravest kind within its own borders and even in its highest seats) would be ridiculous, if it were not a fitter object for pity and grief. How often must one repeat that no amount of good points and persons can make an association to be God's Church, unless it be the assembly of those recognized as God's saints gathered in the Lord's name, and in subjection to the word and Spirit of God! This the Anglican system never was, any more than the various associations of Dissent. To meet on divine ground, of course separate from every unscriptural form, as far as we know it, is the aim of "Brethren," and the occasion of the Christian Observer's charge of schism, which to us seems no better than the blindness of prejudice, as it flows from sheer ignorance. It is evident, moreover, that if Anglicanism were really God's Church in England, every species of Dissent would be schism, according to page 911, and the large allowance of differences of worship in other communions would be wholly unjustifiable, contrary to page 907. The fact is, that the premisses and the conclusions of this writer are equally and altogether at fault. Separation from that which is not God's Church, though pretending to it, is not necessarily to create a fresh sect (as some absurdly conceive), but an absolutely necessary condition if we would "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Am I free to abide in a body whose membership and ministry I believe to be opposed to God's word? I might, no doubt,

have continued a member of it, lay or clerical, like some thousands alas! even of real Christians, not to speak of others, who are convinced, like myself, that it is but a human politico-religious system, and not a Church of God, any more than societies framed on the narrow basis of some peculiar and perhaps mistaken ordinance, the denial of external divine institutions, or the maintenance of an earthly founder's plan. Do they really believe that subscribing Art. 6 absolves their consciences, either in using formularies they know to be unscriptural, or in not obeying the Scriptures as to the assembly, the Spirit's action there, ministry, discipline, etc.; in short, in never doing the right and always doing the wrong thing in matters that concern the Lord's glory in the Church here below? Tetzel offered indulgences for sin cheap enough, and yet too dear in result; but what shall we say of this evangelical license for a pliant conscience?

Further, I can understand prejudice steeling a man against the scriptural evidence we produce for the nature of God's Church, and the presence and operation of the Holy Ghost in it; but he who treats such a matter as a crotchet or a persuasion about meats or drinks (page 912), and not as a fundamental question for the believer and the Church,7 does not seem to me, I confess, qualified spiritually, morally, or intellectually to assume the place of an instructer in divine things. It is easy for such a mind to fling out accusations of "mental idolatry" and "singular obstinacy;" it may even appear loving and Christ-like to argue that the apostle classes us as the ἄσπονδοι, the implacables or irreconcilables, with the most wicked of characters. Does he think it consistent with this in the next and final paragraph (p.

913) to admit that the “Plymouth Brethren” have got hold of a good deal of scripture truth, and have, most of them, no deliberate intention of doing wrong; and (believing, as they easily can, that some of them possess considerable gifts) to suggest some sort of linsey-wolsey spiritual occupation in the English Establishment? With such dreary jokes (if a joke this part, or the whole, of the paper can be) in serious matters I have no sympathy. But I may say (with unfeigned respect and love to the saints of God I know, and the many more I can believe to be, in that system,) that from first to last more sorry specimens of a religious essay than these of the Christian Observer on the “Plymouth Brethren” it has not been my lot to find, even in a day when the press teems with productions which have not a grain of personal modesty, love to brethren, fear of God, or real knowledge of His truth. Did they design to expose themselves or to prove the value of what we have learnt from scripture, I doubt that they could do either more effectually than by committing a principal organ of the Evangelical party to attacks which injure none but themselves, and themselves in every point of view, with men of faith and intelligence.

1 The italics are the Christian Observer’s.

2 Let the reader bear in mind that any names or views of men cited in this paper are not here regarded as of the least authority. They are summoned as Anglican witnesses of respectability to show the unreasonableness of the Christian Observer’s criticism and abuse. Take another sample from Dr. Whitby’s comment on Matthew 16:18 (and W. was and perhaps is the favourite commentator with the bishops, professors of divinity, and other leaders of the English

Establishment). “First, then, observe that our Lord speaks here of his church, not as a thing in present being, or as a building now erected, but as hereafter to be raised, and therefore doth not say, οἰκοδομῶ, I build at present, but οἰκοδομήσω, upon this rock I will hereafter build my church, the christian church commencing after our Saviour’s resurrection and ascension; of such a church to be hereafter founded by St. Peter’s preaching to the Jew and Gentile, and the baptizing of men converted by his preaching, our Lord here plainly speaketh in this text... Secondly, observe this promise punctually was fulfilled, by our Lord’s using St. Peter’s ministry, in laying the foundation of a Christian church among the Jews and Gentiles, and in his being the first preacher to them of that faith he doth here confess, and making the first proselytes to it; we therefore, suitably to this promise, find that Peter laid the first foundations of a church among the Jews, by the conversion of three thousand souls, (Acts 2:41,) who, when they gladly had embraced St. Peter’s doctrine, were all baptized, and then we first find mention of a Christian church in these words, ‘And the Lord added daily to the Church such as should be saved,’ (ver. 47.)” (Whitby’s Paraphrase, etc. in loc., Pitman’s edition.)

3 As a striking evidence of the precariousness of the clause one way or another, I would cite the exceeding vacillation here of a man in whom learning and piety and spiritual intelligence united to make an unusually good judge of these matters, J. Alb. Bengel, His critical opinions in general were carefully formed and rarely changed. But here, in his ed. maj. of 1734, he only cites the omission of τῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ in his margin, or foot of the

page, to disapprove of it. In His Gnomon, 1741, he approves of the omission. In his ed. min. of 1753 he is in suspense. Hence in the Spicileg. Lectt. Varr. at the end of the ed. of 1790 (drawn up by E. Bengel) there is no remark whatever on Acts 2:47 as furnishing any reading especially worthy of attention; whereas it is noted on Acts 9:31, “ex c. xvi. 5 pluralis videtur irrepsisse. Vim habet h. l., Bengelio judice, numerus singularis.”

4 It may be worth while to add that among men of known ability and of every ecclesiastical shade, even of some as far as possible from “Brethren” and of others on the evangelical platform, there is no hesitation in coming to the same conclusion as I do on Acts 7:38. There is this slight difference that some, as Grotius, contend for the congregation of Israel in general, while others, as Kühnöl, think that it means that particular assembly of Israel which gathered at Sinai when the law was given. But I do not know a single person of weight who does not accept one or other of these shades of the same thing, without a word about the inference which the Christian Observer seems to think everybody holds except “the Brethren.” This is the more remarkable, because most of these writers held the usual loose traditional view of the Church as the aggregate expression of God’s people from first to last. Yet they were faithful enough to Holy Writ not to force this verse to say what it was not intended to convey. Thus Schleusner says on the expression here, “concio Israelitarum, ad audiendam legem convocata;” and Dr. Hastings Robinson in his monograph (Πράξεις τῶν Ἀποστόλων, Cantabr. 1824) differs not from others: “Sermo est in h. 1. de certa quadam populi concione, qualis illa fuit in promulganda lege ad montem Sinai

congregata." Meyer (Krit. exeget. Kommentar, Göttingen, 1835, in loc.) takes the same view, as does Bloomfield. The truth is that the word ἐκκλησία in itself determines nothing, as being applied, even in the book of the Acts alone, in three senses, Jewish, Gentile, and Christian: — first, the assembly in the wilderness; secondly, the assembly at Ephesus; and thirdly, the assembly whether in Jerusalem, etc., or absolutely. It is the context which decides either by some particular qualification or by the general bearing.

5 "It is not salvation of their souls only he [Mr. Kelly] plainly tells them, they ought to consider, but the unalterable plan, which, according to him, God has laid down for His Church, or 'the Assembly.' This is made by him an Article of the Faith. He has got so possessed with his own figment about the Church, (for a mere figment it is, as we have shown) that this fills the whole sphere of his imagination and constitutes, in fact, his creed which he would constrain all others to adopt as essential to their Christianity. If he could show us the place in Scripture, where it is written. 'He that believeth not this shall be damned,' we might be brought to listen to him ourselves. But we read in our Bibles many things which Mr. Kelly and others of his sect, seem not to see, such as 'But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes' (2 Tim. 2:23.)" (pp. 907).

6 Since writing this I have examined Mr. Mackintosh's tract, and I distinctly charge the critic with misrepresentation at the least. Mr. M. denies progressive sanctification to be taught in 1 Cor. 1:30, 1 Cor. 6:11; Acts 26:18, and Hebrews 10:10, but he maintains it from John 17:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Ephesians 5:26, and Heb. 12:14. "Here (says he) we see

sanctification presented not merely as something absolutely and eternally true of us in Christ but also as wrought out in us daily and hourly by the Holy Ghost through the word. Looked at, from this point of view, sanctification is obviously a progressive thing." (Sanctification: what is it? p. 19.) What can one think of the Christian Observer? It is certainly and inexcusably mistaken. But the note to page 896 looks so much like confusion that I am willing to hope the writer is inconceivably dull, not deliberately false. In August he said that we twisted 1 Cor. 12:3, aiming at the doctrine that Jesus bore the curse of the law for us. (p. 610.) I replied (Evangelical Organs, p. 19) that the text was aimed at something wholly different, taught by a former Fellow of Exeter College, to whom we refused fellowship. Now, in the above note, he means to correct his error, but falls into the new and absurd blunder that the Fellow in question held that Jesus did not bear the curse of the law for us! Having already explained what he really held, which has no resemblance to this. I do not feel disposed to repeat a painful story.

7 Schism we feel most deeply, and sects (αἱρεσεις), a yet sadder fruit of the same bitter root of self-will, we have honestly sought at all cost to keep ourselves pure from. But it is the reverse of either schism or sectarianism to quit every confederation even of genuine Christians where the ground of fellowship is not, and never was, the name of Christ as the centre maintained in holy discipline by the Holy Ghost through the written word, and this in the unity of Christ's body. Our one desire as to this is to be gathered and kept thus, as the saints were at the beginning. Nothing but a spirit of obedience in God's children can give them to feel and

act aright, withdrawing them not from God's assembly but from every substitute for it, and engaging them to follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. To accredit as God's Church that which really is not, being neither so founded nor so perpetuated, is not to avoid schism but to help on the mystery of lawlessness and build up the great city of confusion. It is manifest wickedness for the Christian to remain where he is if it be confessedly "only the world under another form." Under every form the world denies Christ, and the Christian is not of it and never should appear to be of it. Neither birth nor any other circumstance is entitled to bar the way of faith. And faith ever judges by God's word, not by what we see, and in spite of the bitterest reproach. Even the Corinthian assembly of old purged out the leaven and proved itself clear: what would have been the result, had they allowed the evil in defiance of the apostle's command? A leavened lump. The important point, however, is to bear in mind that the religious societies of Protestantism never were gathered on scriptural ground, any more than Popery, though of course very different otherwise.

Brethren and their Traducers

A refutation of Rev. F. Whitfield's letter to Rev. O. Debrée.

"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." — Jer. 6:16.

No sooner had appeared my reply to a respectable assailant, than a fresh attack follows from a Mr. Whitfield — once, it seems, with "Brethren," then after the Dublin breach, in 1850, with the Bethesda or neutral party, and now a clergyman. His letter intimates (pp. 3, 4) that, while ostensibly apart from the Anglican body, he had never abandoned it altogether; but the character of the statements is such that the secession of the author, in his present state, ought to be a real relief to any circle where Christ is named. His honesty or his judgment before that step, was not worth much by his own account: whether they are worth more now, others will judge, when they have read my examination. From none have fallen stronger expressions of disgust at his tract than from members of the English Establishment. Some of different temper may be but too eager to receive the rashest language, and the most rancorous reports, and they may even refuse to hear the disproof. But God is not mocked.

Singularly enough, the very title page, with its motto of Prov. 18:17, bears the stamp of confusion on it. For each of my opponents has been "first in his own cause;" and my lot is to search them. They, not I, provoked or

renewed the controversy. The main subjects are here arranged under separate heads.

I. — Is “Every Parishioner” A Saint?

Mr. W. affirms this (p. 6), lowering the notion of saintship so as to embrace all the christened who are not openly gross. Not so Mr. Dobrée, who admitted that the “affecting difference between the believing and the unbelieving is to be maintained and manifested not only in individual walk, but also in the gatherings of the saints, separate from those who know not Jesus. It is the will of God that it should be so.” (Sep. p. 4.) Mr. W. maintains, on the contrary, that “saints” are “professing Christians, comprising both true and false!” and founds his conclusion on the address to the Corinthians. Strange that two officials, not only of the same system but of the same section in it, should at the very start oppose each other so diametrically (the last thing intended or perhaps even now seen by either); and this not on some small detail, but on a fundamental question, which yields in moment to few others in this discussion. If Mr. D. be right in this, as I am satisfied he is, how can it be denied that his coadjutor is totally wrong?

As to any difference in interpreting “every parishioner” (p. 4), the question does not even exist among upright men: the prayer-book, the canons, and the commentators on both are too explicit. Save the scandalous, who are expressly excepted, “every parishioner” includes the entire baptized population in each given district, i.e. practically any one that likes to take the Communion. Is this maintaining and manifesting the difference between believers and unbelievers? How does the admission of every

parishioner to the Sacrament consist with gatherings of the saints, separate from those who know not Jesus? Which is God's will? and which man's? Mr. W. talks of "every professing Christian parishioner" (p. 4); but every body knows that the profession required in Anglicanism amounts to repeating the catechism and being confirmed. Is it pretended that this is what Scripture means by the confession or profession of a Christian man? He who seriously thinks so, must be a questionable Christian himself.

Further, the point is not what evils or errors broke out in the Corinthian church, but what was sought, according to Scripture, before souls were accepted anywhere and addressed as saints. Why is not this, the true enquiry, fairly met? Now no fact is more patent throughout the Apostolic history than that those baptized and received into the Church were accredited as true believers in Christ, regenerate, anointed and sealed of the Spirit. (Acts 2:37-42, 47; Acts 4:4, 32, 33; Acts 5:13, 14; Acts 8:12-17, 38, 39; Acts 10:44-48; Acts 11:17, 18, 19-26; Acts 13:43, 52, and so on.) The Epistles of course confirm this. Thus, taking the first that comes, the Roman saints had their faith spoken of throughout the whole world, and Paul thanks God for them all. What Christian in his senses could thank God for "every parishioner" — I will not say in London, but — in any parish of England or Guernsey? As to Corinth, whatever men may exaggerate or defame, the Lord told the Apostle (Acts 18) that in this city He had much people, and not merely many professors. It is not the fact, though Mr. W. says it, that "some of them were not reconciled to God;" for 2 Cor. 5 is an address to the Corinthian saints, not about their own need of

reconciliation, but about the character of the embassy, and the message to be preached to the world. Indeed, if anything of the sort were proved thereby, it would deny the saintship of not “some” but all there who had to be reconciled to God. Again, some, by their denial of the resurrection of the dead, betrayed their ignorance of God; as others fell into grievous and profane sins. But there is no reason to think the error was adhered to after the first Epistle; and surely David went as far astray morally as any: was he a true saint, or a false professor? These things, then, do not show that “saints” comprise false and true, like “every parishioner.” The reader, taking any or all the other addresses to the churches, can estimate the worth of the assertion, “that our Church uses the term ‘parishioner’ in the same sense as Paul used the term ‘saint.’“ It is a fiction which dishonours God and ruins man.

“If Mr. Kelly had, with an unbiassed mind, taken his Hebrew Bible and Lexicon in his hand, he would have found that there is scarcely one of these terms (?) that is not used in an ecclesiastical as well as a spiritual sense.” — (p. 6.) Neither in Old Testament nor in New are “parishioner” and “saint” used in the same sense; nor “parishioner” in any sense. How the Hebrew could decide an ecclesiastical question is perplexing; for Mr. W. admits (p. 34), that in our Lord’s time “the Church was not formed.” Undoubtedly, in the Levitical economy, Israel as a nation, and Jerusalem as a city, were called holy in an external way; but even then as now, “saints,” as said of individuals, implied real intrinsic separation to God by the effectual operation of the Holy Ghost. The difference is that then the saints were, so to speak, units, and chiefly among the Jewish people; whereas

now, since the Cross and Pentecost, saints are called out from Jews and Gentiles into separation from the world, and baptized by one Spirit into one body, the Church. This is the teaching of the New Testament, the Gospels preparing the way, the Acts showing the facts historically, and the Epistles furnishing the dogmatic exposition. Nationalism may labour to justify itself by the Jewish model in the Hebrew ritual; but indiscriminate reception is unknown to, and contradicted by, all that God reveals as His will for the Church. The uniform practice herein was receiving such as were honestly taken to be believers in Christ and possessors of the Holy Spirit. Mistakes might be made, and hypocrites or self-deceived slip in: once in, faith trusted God, if His will, to manifest them by such moral or doctrinal evil as must require their excision according to His Word For the temple of God is holy, which temple the saints are.

Another remark (pp. 4, 5) is too serious as well as characteristic to be passed by. When the Holy Sacrament, says Mr. W., “was profaned by the Corinthian Church, the apostle did not constitute the sound portion of that body a judge of the spiritual character and standing of those who so grossly sinned in regard to it. Mr. Kelly’s plan would be that he or others should judge their fellow-worshippers, in order to provide against unfit communicants. The Church’s design is to call on men to ‘examine themselves’ as the most effectual and Scriptural means of securing purity of communion. As to the issue thus raised, we are quite satisfied to be guided by him who said, ‘let a man examine himself (and not his neighbour), and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.’ — 1 Cor. 11:28.”

Now the Lord had already dealt with that sin directly (ver. 30), as an apostle had been given to act yet more promptly for Him in the different case of Ananias and Sapphira. But had not the Holy Ghost, in 1 Cor. 5, charged the body of the saints to judge evildoers hardly so vile and irreverent? Does He invest the saints with that which must result in "an ecclesiastical despotism?" (p. 5.) "I have written unto you not to keep company if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, [is this necessarily scandalous?] or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner: with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? [precisely what is called "Mr. Kelly's plan."] But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Here then, beyond controversy, is God's plan. He does constitute the assembly judge of evil apparent in their midst, commanding the refusal of any mark of fellowship, if a brother so called were guilty of drunkenness, etc. Is it not then equally blind and audacious to argue, that drunkenness at the Lord's table was not to be thus judged, because the direction of 1 Cor. 5 is not repeated in 1 Cor. 11? Is that ignorance sinless, which perverts the self-examination here called for, so as to blot out the Church's obligation to judge those within, already enjoined? In Scripture, all is perfect and perfectly arranged. Public, corporate discipline was authoritatively laid down in chap. 5. If the apostle declared this to be God's will there, and faithless men heard not: wherefore would they hear it again, in a portion which formally treats not of discipline but of the Lord's Supper? Will these mis-reasoners dare to say that the assembly ought to deal with the drunkard in general,

but not with the aggravated case of Eucharistic drunkenness? Decorous men, if mistaken, from High Church and from Low Church, have hitherto crossed my path: the least logical and the most immoral argument yet offered was reserved for Mr. Whitfield.

II. — Reconciliation In Scripture And In Art. 2.

Even Mr. W. agrees (pp. 6, 7) that it is the sinner who, in Scripture, is called on to be reconciled to God. This ought to close his mouth. For the need of an atoning sacrifice is another question and common ground, which last is confessed in p. 8, after an effort, worthy of the author, to link me with Mr. Maurice and the Socinians What is the fact? Mr. M. and all his company still preach their abominations under sanction of Anglican “orders,” without effectual hindrance, still abuse God’s reconciling love to evacuate the Atonement; all the “Brethren,” without a single exception, maintain both truths fully, unambiguously, and tenaciously: what a resemblance — to a man troubled with an evil eye! Unclean spirits, in presence of Jesus, we are told, cried saying, Thou art the Son of God: am I therefore to give up this truth? or any other truth, because a foul mouth may utter it for its own purposes? To a believer, the sole question should be, “what saith the Scripture?” Does the Article speak like it? Clearly not. The Article speaks of reconciliation, as well as “sacrifice.” Atonement naturally and properly falls under this last, so that the objection remains in all its strength against the error that He suffered, etc., to reconcile His Father to us. — As to the etymology of the English! word, more sense might have been expected from an ordinarily intelligent person, than impressing such an element to settle

doctrine. Atonement, theologically, means expiation: to run from its actual force to its verbal source, is childish or worse. Its doctrinal meaning is not at-one-ment, which last, in truth, is a favourite Socinian (as well as Irvingite) idea. Hearken to one: “atonement always means in the Bible, making two or more persons at one or agreed” — a statement not so unlike some of Mr. W.’s talk, but clean contrary to the truth; for atonement, as a dogma, (the only question here,) never means anything but propitiation for sin. Another notable argument, (p. 8,) is that Rom. 5:11, entirely justifies the language of the Article: — i.e. the well-known blunder, in our A.V., of substituting “atonement” for “reconciliation,” eked out by the second blunder of substituting “reconciliation” for “atonement,” in Heb. 2:17! The scholarship, the reasoning, and the doctrine, are suited companions, vainly defending what is indefensible. Lastly, even were it supposed for a moment that Art. 17 etc., (p. 9,) present the right view, how could this purge Art. 2 from the taint of impurity? Does the signature of a truth clear the conscience in subscribing to an error? Let men beware how they trifle with so grave a case.

III. — Is Ministry From Heaven, Or Of Men?

Ministry, in Scripture, (not in Art. 23), is the exercise of a gift, bestowed, in general, directly from above, but in exceptional cases, as Timothy’s, by Apostolic imposition of hands. Hence, God’s Word knows nothing of ordaining men simply for preaching, teaching, or the employment of any other gift. Does not the Article estop (preclude) within Anglican limits the liberty of ministry which Scripture asserts? To minister in the congregation there, without being called by men, is unlawful: in the Church

of the Scriptures, (Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12. 14, 16, Eph. 4, Phil. 1, Col. 2, 4, 1 Thess. 5, 1 Peter 4, etc.) it is not legitimate only, but a responsibility in every case where the Lord causes His light to shine. Where is the judgment or the candour of denying the difference? Not even the Jews were so penned up in their synagogues, as appears from Acts 13:15, 16, Acts 17:1, 2. And though the inroads of corruption were rapid, deep, and wide-spread in the early Church, (in nothing more marked, than as to ministry,) yet as late as the third century, traces of Scriptural liberty still linger. Thus Origen publicly preached and taught in the churches in Palestine, though not then ordained. And when Demetrius, of Alexandria, complained of it as unheard-of disorder, Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, and Theoctistus, bishop of Caesarea, take their brother bishop roundly to task, and affirm that "wherever any are found fit to profit the brethren, the holy bishops ask them to discourse unto the people," giving instances where it had been done under Episcopal eyes. (Euseb. H. 13. vi. 19.)

But Mr. W. retorts ("myself being a witness," p. 10) that "Brethren" "do the same." I am compelled to say that his statement is untrue — has not even the appearance of truth. In certain cases, we do commend to God's grace those who go forth for Christ's sake, taking nothing of the Gentiles; but we never send any. Can that be what he so grossly mis-states? Nor do "Brethren" ordain elders, though they heartily allow that Apostles, or a duly-authorised deputy like Titus, quite rightly appointed these local overseers. But they do not see such Apostolic authority in others, any more than they claim it for themselves; if they knew of its existence

anywhere, they would gladly seek its succour and sanction in the cases where Scripture shows it applied. Yet “Brethren” are no worse off in this respect than some of the choicest, happiest, and most blessed assemblies when Paul wrote. Is this my opinion only? Hear the excellent Bishop Hall in his Apology against Brownists (Works, vol. ix. p. 416). “He (Paul) writes to Rome, Corinth, and other Churches. Those his Divine Letters, in a sweet Christian civility, salute even ordinary Christians. And would he have utterly passed by all mention of these Church officers, amongst his so precise acknowledgment of lesser titles in others, if they had been all thus ordained? yet all these, more than true Churches, famous some of them, rich, forward, and exemplary.” In Anglicanism, on the contrary, there is the pretension to ordain without the requisite authority; and Art. 23 is doubly wrong, if Scripture is indeed our standard, — as wrong in hindering the free exercise of spiritual gift in the congregation, as in appointing without competent title from God. If this be true, and needed truth for the fuller glorifying of God, it is not “lack of grace and love” to press it earnestly on His children; the real want of grace, methinks, is in such as resent it.

IV. — Articles 36 And 37.

I had pronounced these “figments,” the offspring of superstition and worldliness respectively. Now for the proof. It is certain from Scripture (Acts 20:17, 28; Phil. 1; l Tim. 3, 5; Titus 1; 1 Peter 5) and allowed by competent, godly Episcopalians that Bishops and Elders are not twain, but one office, and that Deacons had a proper work, for which they, (and not necessarily the

Elders or Bishops), were distinctively fitted, instead of its being a kind of ecclesiastical boy-bachelorship, through which all must pass to the higher grades. Why, then, is a practice adhered to; in the face of Scriptures, which condemn it in the Ordinal itself? Because it is an ancient superstition. Custom, however, without truth, is but error with grey hairs, as Cyprian said. A more confused scheme can hardly be. For the Prayer-Book applies 1 Tim. 3 and Acts 20 to the Episcopal order in the sense of tradition, (not of Scripture), contrary to the judgment of many of their ablest doctors, who refer them both to Presbyters. This creates a gap in the form and manner of Ordering of Priests, where from want of texts treating of their duties with precision, they read Eph. 4:7, Matt. 9:36, and John 10:1, not one of which is appropriate to Elders as such. But the worst of all is the abuse of our Lord's words in John 20 and the pretension to confer the Holy Ghost without the power. Our Lord, on the evening of His resurrection, breathed on those present, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins," etc. not the receivers were the disciples, not apostles only, still less presbyters. The Anglican mistake is palpable, and the superstition dangerous; for that is made the peculiar badge of a few (with "ecclesiastical despotism," here indeed, "the inevitable result,") which Christ gave as the blessed portion of us all. When I know how saints in the Establishment have groaned under all this, how revolting is the unscrupulous zeal of one who seems resolved to atone for past infidelity to the Church of his forefathers by an almost frenzied readiness to do battle now for its worst faults!

As to the Sovereign's supremacy in civil things, "Brethren" yield to none in willing homage and subjection, not for wrath, but conscience' sake. Are we to render to Caesar the things not of Caesar only, but of God too? Scripture attributes the headship of the Church to Christ only. "Spiritual," as distinguished from Ecclesiastical supremacy is pure fancy: if not, where is the proof? God's Word leaves no room for human headship of the Church, Papal or Royal; while it demands allegiance to the Crown in its own external sphere. If the Church was only formed after the Saviour's death, Art. 37 must be all in the dark about the prerogative "given always to all godly princes in Holy Scripture," as far as Ecclesiastical things are concerned. Those who claim the chief rule in these estates for a King or Queen, are bound to prove it, if they can, from the Scriptures which really speak of the Church, and not of Judaism: if recourse is had to the latter only, we can see whither such men are bound. What can be more "worldly" than, without Scripture, to invent a place in the Church corresponding to the highest earthly seat? Are the world and the Church but different aspects of the same body? Alas! too true in the minds of many.

V. — The Articles Deficient.

The charge was, that they do not even allude to some of the weightiest of revealed truths; such as the regeneration, indwelling and other operations of the Spirit, though upholding His deity and personality; and, in particular, that one would not gather from them the baptism of the Holy Ghost or His presence and distribution of gifts in the Church. The answer confirms the accusation, for Art. 27 treats not of regeneration,

but of its sign. It is false that regeneration itself is referred to, save only as signified by baptism. It was meant clearly that there is no allusion to its own proper nature in the Articles. If Art. 27 really conveys that baptism is “an instrument through which the Holy Ghost operates,” (p. 12), it is much worse than I ever thought it to be; because this would be a formal avowal of Baptismal regeneration here, as well as in the Services. Nor does Art. 17 allude to the indwelling, or the anointing, the seal or the earnest of the Spirit. His general working is not the matter in question, but His operations distinctively, and in particular, the nature and effects of His presence in the Christian and in the Church, as contra-distinguished from all that existed before Pentecost. Again, the reference to Articles 6 and 9 as Anglican testimony to Christ’s headship, priesthood and advocacy, proves simply that Mr. W. does not understand these great truths. Besides, my argument was not for, but against such a human Confession, because of the evident imperfection of the Thirty-nine. But why the addition of some omitted and momentous truths of God should be “burdensome” (p. 13) to one who justifies errors and deficiencies alike, is not reasonable.

Next, Art. 6, while it asserts the sufficiency of Scripture for salvation, in opposition to Rome, does not imply that any Anglican, above all, a clergyman, is at liberty to dissent from the formularies, no matter how sure he may be that certain parts are unscriptural. This may possibly tax the “patience” of a zealot, but it is perfectly certain. Is this, then, duly to maintain the authority of God’s Word? In the haste to contradict what no man can in fairness gainsay, Mr. W. says, (p. 14), that this Article

“asserts two things, the sufficiency of Scripture for salvation, and secondly,” whatsoever is not read therein, (about any matter) is not to be required of any man; and then refers to Art. 20. Now this is incorrect, as well as misapplied: for what is called the second thing in Art. 6 is indubitably the further explanation of its one object. And the prefatory Royal Mandate assumes that Anglicanism has nothing in doctrine or regimen but what agrees with Scripture. Whatever may be the outcry of some, (p. 14), I have produced proof enough from God’s Word, which His grace will make effectual, I doubt not, in souls open to conviction.

VI. — Baptismal Regeneration.

That this is the doctrine of the Services for baptism, and the remains of Popish darkness, is my charge. What is the reply? I am sent to Arts. 25 and 27! It is taken for granted that there can be no jar between these Articles and the Services: a notion quite opposed to the judgment, not merely of unbiassed men, but of many Anglicans entitled to respect. It is well known that the Tractarians rely on the Services for Baptismal regeneration, and the Evangelicals on the Articles against it, and both with too much reason. For compromise has been the policy almost always, and thus real consistency exists for neither of the opposed parties. Now I impugned the Services, not the Article on baptism; and I do not accept the latter as security for the former. The really “uncandid and disingenuous conduct” is exclusively on his part who evades the question. The one point, which I have accused of Popish darkness, remains; the three Services, the Catechism, and the Confirmation, all attest that the Anglican

doctrine is, regeneration of the Spirit in and by baptism. I have never said or thought that the Articles affirm this: let him who will, (I do not) say, that they contradict it. If it were true that they did contradict, a further proof would be afforded of their slippery, incoherent character, but no proof at all that the Services do not repeat, and are not founded on, one of the worst errors of Rome. Is it not certain that the Services suppose the subject (infant or adult) to be unregenerate before the rite of baptism, and pronounce it regenerate immediately after? Is not this Popish enough for an evangelical clergyman's task? Or does the mischief lie, not in the pestilent falsehood which declares that the baptized are all regenerate, but in the salt, the saliva, the anointing, the exorcisms, etc.? Where does Scripture teach this doctrine? Is it in Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Titus 3:5? Does any one of these texts, or John 3:5; or Mark 16, quoted afterwards (pp. 17, 19), attribute spiritual life to baptism? There is no semblance of that fatal error. I acknowledge the great importance of baptism as the first formal act which accompanies the confession of Christ. I own that he who refuses in such circumstances to submit to baptism has no proper title to be recognised as a Christian. True repentance and faith are inseparable, and neither can be without the quickening of the Spirit; but baptism is due to Christ as the expression of owning the Lord who died for us and rose again. The Jews who repented in Acts 2, were told to be baptized before they received the Pentecostal gift; the Gentiles of Cornelius' household had the promise of the Father given to them before they were baptized; but in neither case, nor in any other of which Scripture speaks, is one soul said to be regenerate by baptism. Of these Scriptures, only John 3 and Titus 3 speak of

regeneration, but not of baptism. Through the word of truth, says James, did God beget us; born again, says Peter, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God; in Christ Jesus, says Paul, I have begotten you through the gospel. Nay more: the same apostle writes to the same saints, thanking God that he had baptized but few of them. “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel:” an incredible slight, if baptism were “plainly declared to be an instrument through which the Holy Spirit operates,” but quite simple, if life be through the gospel received in the heart by the Holy Spirit. “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life,” and so, even before, John writes, “as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” There is not a word about baptism, but all is to believe. So the application of John 3 to baptism is merely traditional, and at variance with the context: for how could Nicodemus understand Christian baptism founded on the not yet accomplished death and resurrection of the Saviour? Our Lord reproaches him, as an Israelitish teacher, for not knowing the new birth; and this, because it was not some new thing, but truth which he should have gleaned from the Psalms and Prophets especially Ezekiel 36:25-27. All the faithful in every dispensation were and must be born of water and the Spirit, one as much as another. The passage, therefore, has no such reference, though I deny not that baptism may outwardly represent the truth there insisted on. I conclude, then, that Scripture offers no cloak to hide the shame of the Anglican Offices for baptism, but, contrariwise, attributes to the Word of God revealing

Christ, that which they assign with Rome to an ordinance.

As for assuming “a meaning for the term regeneration” (p. 18), the Services etc. speak with such clearness and emphasis as to exclude doubt. “Spiritual regeneration,” “born again,” “regenerated with the Holy Spirit,” “my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven,” ought to leave no room for hesitation. And very singular it is, that the same pen which in pp. 12 and 17 ventured on the ground of sacramental grace for baptism, descends so low in page 19 as to assert that “regeneration in all these services means the open admission of candidates into the church; their visible adoption as the Lord’s children, of which water is the sign and pledge.” Had this been said of baptism, one might have little to object; but to speak thus of “regeneration,” is to impose, if on himself, on very few others, I hope. The doctrine is thoroughly bad — anti-evangelical, as well as anti-Anglican. 1 had almost omitted to say that I doubt not for a moment God’s mercy to infants who die (pp. 17, 18). Matt. 18 is a comforting warrant as to not merely the little ones which believe in Christ, but little children in general. But spiritual regeneration in and by baptism is a serious thing for man to assert, whether for young or old, without God’s Word. We may speak of answers to prayer; but is it “believing prayer” which asks for what is unscriptural? If baptismal regeneration be heterodox, prayer cannot make it true or holy.

My blaming the application of the ark to the Church, instead of to Christ, is deemed “very absurd.” “What little paltry things the Plymouth Brethren catch at!” (p.

20) The ark notwithstanding is allowed to be a type of Christ; but this defence for the other turn is set up, that Christ and the Church are one and the baptized person is not only in the ark, but in Christ's Church! This is certainly a piece of pleading and exegesis which "Brethren" have no reason to envy. Adam and Eve were one, and typify the great mystery of the Church's union with Christ. But were the "living souls" one with "the vessel" which carried them through the deluge? "A little learning is a dangerous thing;" and Mr. W. is a witness of it. Does a spiritual man require to be told that the ark typifies salvation in and by Christ, not oneness with Him, which is shown elsewhere? To misapply the ark to the Church, is another bit of Popery, it is to confound the saved with the Saviour.

The next paragraph (pp. 20, 21) is a melancholy sample of the lengths to which a soul can flounder, when an apology for error is undertaken. "The scheme of sponsors is clearly sanctioned in Deut. 29:10-16." The author of the argument, unconscious of making its folly manifest to all, does not fail to print the decisive proof in italics and capitals — "also with him that is NOT HERE, with us this day (unborn children)." Happy people of Kirkby Ravensworth! Other poor churchmen must wait at least till the children are born, before sponsors can do their work; you, of course, are taught to do what the children of Israel did, "by the same high authority" which publishes it to the world at large. One would think that, according to this principle, the three thousand souls, added on the day of Pentecost, ought to have stood sponsors for all the Christian children not yet born; especially as Peter told them, "The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off,

even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” The argument that it is the Abrahamic covenant, because of the reference to the fathers in verse 13, is frivolous. It was, no doubt, another covenant besides that which the Lord made with them at Horeb — a special covenant, when the children of Israel were in Moab, in order to enable them to enter the promised land, and enjoy it provisionally. When the covenant, not with the children, but with the fathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) really comes into force for “that nation,” they will enjoy the promises for ever; as we do now in Christ, and in a heavenly way, according to Galatians and Hebrews.

VII. — Confession Of Sin.

Before turning to this last section, let me ask the reader of Mr. W.’s letter to compare my words, before he believes the groundless calumny that the reading of the Word of God in the [Establishment was attacked. I reasoned from the acknowledged design of the “Sentences” to show that the impenitent are there contemplated, and not saints only. Neither Mr. W. nor any one else ever heard those passages read, as they are there used, in any assembly of “Brethren” met to worship God. The “Absolution” was challenged as unscriptural, and chiefly for being sacerdotal, not declarative merely: else a deacon might read it, as surely as he might preach if licensed. Mr. W. infers (page 22) that I do not believe Christians have sins to confess! If he have an atom of conscience which has escaped the hot iron, how could he overlook the words in that very place? “I cordially allow the value to God’s children of confessing their sins of omission and commission individually,” etc. The disgraceful spirit which so

tortures my words, would have sought to torture myself in days bygone — to return, perhaps, for a brief moment yet. As to the Litany, or the Collect which supposes worshippers not merely to have sin in them, but to be "tied and bound with the chain of their sins," (pp. 23, 24,) if people cannot discern the contrast between such misery and bondage, and the living liberty in the Spirit which Rom. 8 depicts as the normal condition of the Christian, they are assuredly for the present beyond the ordinary means of Scriptural conviction. They have lost the power of the gospel of God's grace in their souls; or, still more probably, they never knew it in deed and in truth. Christians I do not doubt they are, whom I love as truly as the "Brethren," for the bond is one, but the state in which they are is not Christian. "Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"

Part II.

The attack on "Brethren," especially at the beginning and close (pp. 25, 43) is written in the worst style of controversy. A vague hue and cry is raised against a body of Christians, as if that existed in their midst which was too bad to name — "the flagrant immoralities among the Plymouth Brethren." Along with a charge which demands the utmost care, and the fullest proof, lest a thoroughly false impression might be conveyed to the ignorant and the prejudiced, credit is more than once and most strangely, assumed for "the mantle of charity!" Do professions of love, loudly and easily made, render ill-will less odious? It is idle to say that there are "many of God's dear people, and many of my own highly-valued and beloved friends" found there. If the accusations were true, if "Brethren" did not clear

themselves habitually from trifling with evil, I, for one, confess that they would be to my mind more guilty than their neighbours. For if others are fettered, we are not; so that any corporate indisposition to justify God, when sin is discovered, would argue a liking for iniquity, not a love of holiness. That among us, as even in the brightest days of God's church, isolated cases of a distressing kind have occasionally occurred here and there, nobody denies; as indeed any serious pretence of immunity from such things would be evident self-deceit. That the outbreak of scandals in those bearing Christ's name, whether among or outside "Brethren," calls for our tears and self-abasement, we feel — not on account of our reputation, but for His sake who is thus afresh wounded in the house of His friends. Let none expect here the praise of "Brethren" as a counter-blast to the foulest detraction, let none fear lest when reviled we should revile again: rather would we commit all to Him who judges righteously. It was probably owing to the Scriptural discipline carried out amongst us, that most cases of this afflicting character became known. What can be less worthy than to turn that grave and holy dealing into a means of blackening "Brethren," who were at least as free from blame as their accusers? If we had hushed all up, if for any consideration we had renounced our liberty and responsibility to put evil away, it would have been justly censurable; as it is, we court enquiry and have no fears for the result.

The charge that we go about, "not to bring sinners to Christ, but to draw away God's people," proves that there is no regard made to the appearance of truth. The sole foundation for it is the large place given everywhere in our midst to the progress of Christians in

the truth. If God's children come, attracted by what they do not find elsewhere, is this our fault? But wherever there are evangelists among "Brethren," there is an active work among the unconverted. I remember a town in England where the same senseless cry was repeated, though the absurdity was peculiarly plain there; for every brother in communion happened to be a preacher of Christ to perishing sinners, and each used to set out on his labours all around, when the Lord's Supper was over.

Revived Truth.

Leaving the divisions till we examine into the cause, let me say that I adhere to the statement respecting the late revival of forgotten truth as to Christ's union with the Church, our proper hope, and the doctrine of the Holy Ghost. Mr. Burgh, (now called de B.) far from recovering these treasures, does not see one of them clearly to this day. The books for which he was noted, and the earliest known to me, were his Lectures on the Second Advent, and his Exposition of the Apocalypse the first editions of which, I believe, did not appear before 1833-4. Before that date, not a few had quitted the Establishment, and "Brethren" in Ireland had been walking in the joyful knowledge of truth far beyond these very elementary and not very sound works for years previously. That people in Dublin might feel a local interest in Mr. B.'s publications, is probable. But he was distrusted by intelligent men; among other reasons for this, — that having seceded, he rejoined the Establishment, on the same ground of tradition which is the basis of Tractarianism. Some may have hailed any glimpses of truth in the writings of one severed from

themselves by so great a gulf. Even as to prophecy, he differs in most of his main principles from those which prevail among “Brethren.” His view of the Seals, e.g., was ridiculous in the extreme. Thus the first he construed as Christ’s Second Coming to judge! and the sixth as the literal signs at that epoch!! Any one who has the smallest insight into the Apocalypse will perceive not merely the double mistake, but the absence it betrays of real light to comprehend the structure of the book. Again, with him, the trumpets were to be taken literally, and not as symbols; the witnesses Moses and Elias, slain literally and rising, etc. I do not think I have looked into either of these books for more than twenty years, or ever saw those published since, nor am I aware of a copy in the possession of any brother. But I remember enough to say the affinity is not with “Brethren,” but with Mr. Newton, who used to recommend Mr. B.’s writings. Both were ultra-futurist, both pseudo-literal, both rejected the older Protestant school, and both judaized greatly. Very different ground was taken, and is kept by leading “Brethren.” I spoke, however, of our proper heavenly hope, as distinguished from the earthly events of prophecy; and of that, as far as I am aware, Mr. B. knows nothing, any more than of the true doctrine of the Church’s oneness with Christ, or of the special presence and operations of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Grosser ignorance as to facts, doctrines, persons, and dates, can hardly be, than in Mr. W.’s account.1

Reception.

As to our receiving or rather rejecting some, the challenge is coarse enough. Every saint who walks as

such is received unconditionally in the Lord's name. This, and no other, is our basis. I am told that it is not so, and that I know it right well! What is the reason for the unbecoming speeches in pp. 27, 28? "If 3 child of God comes to you from Mr. Newton's congregation, would you receive him at your table?" I answer, certainly not, because we are satisfied that such an one, if a child of God, is not walking as such, and is, therefore, inadmissible at the Lord's table. How could one be suffered to break bread whom we believe to be a partaker of the evil deeds of a blasphemer against the Lord? The general principle of welcoming every Christian, without imposing conditions of ours, is in no way contradicted by the most resolute refusal of those who dishonour Christ's name morally, or of others who bring not the doctrine of Christ — a still more terrible and fatal form of sin. 1 Cor. 5 is no plainer for parting from an immoral man that is called a brother, than 2 John is for rejecting such as do not hold a true Christ.2 It matters not what may seem to be their personal qualities: Christ himself ought to be infinitely more precious; and true love is proved by abhorring that which is evil, as really as by cleaving to what is good. Scripture is too explicit to allow a loop-hole of escape from the positive obligation of the Christian as to this vital matter.

Further, 2 John is decisive that it is not enough to be personally sound in the faith. Even a woman, the elect lady, is instructed by the apostle as to her own direct responsibility, if any one sought her house or fellowship who brought false doctrine about Christ. "If there come any to you, and bring not this doctrine [of Christ], receive him not into your house, neither bid him God

speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." That is to say, the principle is distinctly laid down, that the person who religiously countenances those who confess not the Christ of God, becomes a partaker of the evil deeds of the deceiver, even without necessarily imbibing the evil doctrine. Indeed, a spiritual mind would feel that dreadful as it is to be misled for a time into such heresy, he is incomparably more guilty who, professing to hold the true doctrine of Christ, consents to fellowship with the man who denies it. "Now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."

Now this is the attitude of "Brethren" towards the alleged blasphemer and his partizans. If we suppose for a moment that the blasphemy is a fact, 2 John not only vindicates the course complained of, but shows that it is an imperative duty, which admits of neither hesitation nor compromise. Had the elect lady, spite of the apostolic warning, deliberately received one who brought not the doctrine of Christ, she would have at once become identified with the guilt of the deceiver, and its consequences. In vain the plea that she was herself a godly christian, and sound in faith: still the Word pronounces — a "partaker of his evil deeds." She would, knowingly in this case, for her own ease have committed herself to an act of high treason against the Lord; she would have yielded to overt communion with that which to the last degree dishonoured His person: and thus, till she had cleared herself from the sin, in the sight of God and man, she would have sunk morally to the level of an accomplice. If she had better light, so much the worse to behave as if she had none. To receive her, under such circumstances, would be to participate in similar wickedness; it would be receiving her not to

the glory of God, but to His shame, because it would be barefaced indifference to the affront put upon His Son. And “whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.” “He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.” “Brethren” have given pretty strong proof that they do not make light of ecclesiastical evil, by separating from all associations which involve departure from God’s Word; but they refuse to put such questions on the same platform with deep, damnable, fundamental denial of Christ. The Word of God, not any theory or rule of ours, is the warrant for both. Did we follow our thoughts or our natural wishes, it is folly to suppose that we should pursue a course which separates us from hundreds and thousands, who would desire to be with us on condition of our letting them tamper with this treason against the Lord. Does such a course look much like anxiety for numbers?

Newtonism And Bethesda.

Mr. Newton’s doctrine, to which I have alluded thus strongly, is, that apart from vicarious sufferings, (“Remarks on the Sufferings of the Lord Jesus,” pp. 2, 3, note, pp. 9, 11), Christ came by birth as a man and an Israelite, into a condition of distance and inflictions from God, in which “He was made experimentally to prove the reality of that condition into which others, but more especially Israel, had sunk themselves, by their disobedience to God’s holy Law, a condition out of which He was able to extricate himself, and from which He could extricate Himself by His own perfect obedience.” (p. 12.) “God pressed these things on the apprehensions of His soul, according to His own power and holiness, and caused Him to feel a part of that

which was exposed to the judgments of His heavy hand" (p. 14.) "And Jesus as man, was associated with this place of distance in which man in the flesh was, and He had through obedience to find His way to that point where God could meet Him, as having finished His appointed work — glorify Him, and set Him at His own right hand, in the heavenly places; and that point was death — death on the cross — death under the wrath of God" (pp. 31, 32).

Again take the following proofs from the "Observations" etc., by B. W. N. "We should regard him not only as one of the banished, but as one suffering also under the penalties which the law of his Father had imposed on the banished ones, with whom he had thus placed himself in association" (p. 8). "He was exposed, for example, because of His relation to Adam to that sentence of death, that had been pronounced on the whole family of man" (p. 9). "The mission of John must be regarded as an all-important era, not only in the life of the Lord Jesus, but in the dispensational arrangements of God. 'The Law and the Prophets were until John: from that time the kingdom of heaven is preached,' is a text sufficiently distinct. Indeed, unless grace be the same as law, and destruction the same as salvation, the infinite importance of that era cannot be denied" (pp. 10, 11). "The fire of Sinai began instantly to burn against them [Israel under curse], and therefore, even if every deserved infliction had been withheld from that moment to the time when Jesus was born, yet still He would have been-one of a nation that was exposed to all the terrors of Sinai" (p. 15). "And if the sorrow and inflictions which had fallen on Israel are said in Scripture to have been the result of 'curse' and of

‘wrath,’ then Jesus would have drunk of a cup of sorrow which was the result of such wrath and such curse.”.... “He would then see that there is a peculiar class of sufferings, added to those which flowed from drinking of the general cup of human sorrow — sufferings which resulted from special inflictions on a peculiar people, and which yet were not the vicarious sufferings of the Cross” (p. 21). “Moreover, the exercises of soul which His elect in their unconverted state ought to have, and which they would have, if it were possible for them to know and feel everything rightly, according to God — such exercises, yet without sin, Jesus had” (p. 26). “The anointing of the Spirit would never have come on Him at Jordan, unless He had been fore-ordained and certainly known as the victim to be slain on Calvary” (p. 32). “And when thus exercised, though personally holy and beloved, He was made to feel that His association with those thus standing in the fearfulness of their distance from God was a real thing, and that it was so regarded by God. His was no mere pretended, imaginary association.” (p. 36.)

If comment were needed on this evidence of strange and poisonous doctrine about our Lord, I would point (not to those who wrote exposures of it, but) to the printed confessions of at least three well-known men (Messrs. B., D., and S., ministerially associated in the closest way with Mr. N.), who owned publicly, and in the most solemn manner, that the doctrine was an elaborate system, permeating their view of a very large part of Scripture, and quite as deadly, if not more so, than had been charged. One of them warned people affectingly, that those who rested on what they had taught for years could not be saved. For briefly the heresy is, that Christ

was by birth, relatively in man's distance as a sinner, and in Israel's special ruin under a broken law; that He was therefore obnoxious to the penalties of this double relationship, not imputatively, nor vicariously, but by association as one of them; that He extricated Himself by obedience, faith, and prayer, out of some of those inflictions by which He was threatened, passing notably by baptism out of law into grace — from Sinai to Zion; that He had the exercises of soul which the elect in their unconverted state ought to have; and that He had, spite of this, to find His way to a point where God could meet Him, — death under God's wrath; the anointing of the Spirit having come on Him at Jordan only in virtue of His own foreseen sacrifice. If all this be not an audacious contempt of God's testimony to our adorable Lord; if it be not a systematic overthrow of all that is really taught of His relation to God as made of a woman, made under the law, if it do not inevitably destroy the atonement and Christianity itself, words have lost their meaning. No heretic that I know ever set himself to debase Christ, — neither Arius nor Socinus, neither Mr. Irving nor Mr. Newton. None of them insinuated personal sin in Christ — Mr. N. perhaps the nearest to it, in that awful illustration, "If I were to send a faithful servant heavily burthened to scale the sides of an icy mountain, and were to see his foot slide, should I marvel?" (Remarks, p. 17, note.) Most heretics have said excellent things — Mr. Irving, perhaps, the most. The true question is: Did the peculiar doctrine of each supplant and destroy God's truth as to His Son? Who doubts that Irvingism did? Who can pretend that Newtonism is less anti-christian? The only right experience, under man's distance and a broken law, such as an elect man would feel if he felt as he ought in that condition, is that of a lost man; and if

Christ, not vicariously, had to find His way to death under wrath as a meeting-place with God, all foundations are gone, and He must die for Himself, and therefore not for us. The partner in a bankrupt firm is necessarily liable: for such an one there can be no suretyship by grace. If it be contended that Christ is supposed to have extricated Himself from liability to die for Himself by good works and a sort of baptismal regeneration under John Baptist's hand, the truth is equally lost in another way; for this assumes deliverance from the wrath due to association with sinful man and transgressing Israel by works and ordinances without death. If again, it be said, Not so, but by His own foreseen sacrifice, we are brought round once more to the former abomination, according to which His death was needed to save Himself, and therefore could avail in no wise for others. The substitutory work of the Saviour thus vanishes, and what is of yet deeper consequence, the dignity of His person which clothes that work with its infinite value. If it be pretended that Mr. N. made an acknowledgement of doctrinal errors, dated Nov. 27th, 1847, I allow that he did withdraw the application of Rom. 5:19 (first clause) to Christ, and the involving Him in the imputation of Adam's sin. But I have made a point of rehearsing as above what has never, so far as I know, been retracted: doctrine more degrading to the Saviour, more calculated to undermine His work, who can show? Let the intelligent and godly judge. Plainly, truthfully put, I have never known a child of God among Churchmen or Dissenters, any more than "Brethren," to hesitate as to its real source and character, as of the enemy, save only where souls had been themselves corrupted. "No man speaking by the Holy Ghost calleth

Jesus accursed;" which is the precise issue here, more fully than in any other system of kindred blasphemy.

When the meeting at Bethesda, (Bristol), admitted several partisans of Mr. N., and thus occasioned a separation far and wide among "Brethren," it had been for years fully owned as enjoying intercommunion. Hence, there is no honesty in comparing that meeting with individuals coming from the national body or dissenters. How far Bethesda really coalesced, it may be hard to say: still, it was an accomplished fact, and no question was raised, till the crisis of 1848 came, when reasons were sought to palliate the fatal deed of receiving the known followers of a convicted heretic. Now we have always excepted cases of real ignorance. But what could justify receiving persons of intelligence who came straight from his party, eulogising and circulating.the very tracts which contained the anti-christian doctrine already described? Bethesda received them in the most determined manner, driving out not a few souls, some of them among the most spiritual, enlightened, and devoted there, who refused to sanction indifference to a blasphemy at Bristol, from which they were at all cost apart at Plymouth and elsewhere. Not satisfied with letting these people in, ten of the leaders at Bethesda put forth a too famous document, in which they laboured to defend their refusal of investigation before receiving the incriminated. The first thing insisted on was that the Bethesda meeting should clear those who signed it: else they would labour no more in their midst! Was it surprising that the mass fell into the snare, and consented to vote the leaders right, before the tracts were read, or comments allowed in presence of the meeting? After the breach was consummated,

they held meetings in which Mr. N.’s doctrine was condemned, especially by Mr. M. as strongly almost as by any outside Bethesda. Partly by this, and partly by other means, Mr. N.’s partisans retired from Bethesda, expressly not waiving their claim to be there, but desiring to release the leaders of some of their difficulties. Could this yield a moment’s satisfaction to a sober Christian? Bethesda was bound to clear itself openly of a sin of the gravest kind openly done: mere words would not avail, nor getting rid of souls in an underhand way. Subsequently a party was formed, a public building was taken, Mr. N. was had there, and two of “the ten” (Messrs. A. and W.) were found in their midst. The movement failed; and these two leading men, to speak of no others, after Bethesda’s loud denunciation of the Newtonian blasphemy, after their own public association with Mr. N., were permitted to return to Bethesda, without the smallest confession of their notorious and flagrant sin. All they owned was the wrong of leaving Bethesda; but they were not asked, nor did they give, an expression of sorrow for the wickedness of fraternising with one who still retained the main part of his heresy as to Christ. And because we renounce all fellowship with such ways and persons, we are covered with the bitterest reproaches which combined folly and malice can heap up! We are taxed with “new tests,” and I know not what. Whereas, on the face of the matter, it was the beloved Apostle, not we, who wrote 2 John. And if he introduced no now test when he insisted on uncompromising rigour wherever a false Christ was in question, how charge us with it who are very simply carrying out the Word of God given through him? Those who plead for laxity in such a case,

would be more consistent if they denied the authority of this Scripture altogether.

Liberty Of Ministry.

How any man who has ever known the assemblies of “Brethren,” can deny that this is the simple, honest practice in their midst, is mysterious. The only explanation of a statement to the contrary, is that an enemy may be so heated as to say anything. The fact is patent and certain. Along with meetings where the faithful come together, as such, according to 1 Cor. 14 there are other occasions when an Evangelist preaches the gospel, or a teacher discourses on a given subject or expounds a portion of the Scriptures. Ignorant persons sometimes confound these two very distinct things, and charge us with inconsistency, because they expect nothing but the assembly always. Wherever men so gifted are found amongst us, there is an active ministry towards both the world and the Church: for those who have from the Master talents to these ends, there are abundant opportunities for trading with them, as well as for souls to seek help and profit by their means. Thus, we have the assemblies of saints, and the exercise of ministry by gifted individuals, wherever such exist, each on its own ground, and both needed for God’s glory, and the well-being of His children. If we denied the place and value of chief men, guides, rulers, etc., it would be the grossest infatuation, forsaking our own mercies, fighting against the Word and Spirit of God, and setting up that lowest of all low things — a religious democracy. As to the evil tale, which our adversary takes up (p. 32,) to show that liberty is in name only and not a reality, I never heard of anything in the least degree resembling

it, save what occurred in the meeting at Plymouth from which “Brethren” separated. Liberty does not mean license for the flesh, nor carelessness as to the truth or holiness. But that there is the fullest real liberty, as the rule among us, is a fact which the reader can ascertain for himself by going to any meeting save those which are convened avowedly for individual ministry.

The Character Of Communion.

The first objection is to the remark that it is a sin to walk and worship with those who are evidently of the world and have not a pure heart wherewith to call on the Lord. This is imagined to be judging others improperly, and a presumptuous interference with God’s prerogative (pp. 33, 34). Can anything be more deplorable? Are those who thus think, aware that the remark was grounded on the plain Word of God in 2 Tim. 2:22? There the apostle first enjoins the duty of purging oneself from vessels to dishonour, (i.e., ungodly professors of Christ in the “great house,”) and then, with the exhortation to flee also youthful lusts, urges on the man of God to follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. If Timothy was right in pursuing this path, are we wrong? If it was no presumption on his part, how can it be on ours? The ignorance of Scriptural principles and practice is truly astounding.

Next, the statements as to the tares are at least as hardy. “Passages which have reference only to individual conduct are applied to the Church in its corporate capacity. I shall only now refer to one — the parable of the tares and wheat” (p. 34). Why it is they who apply it thus, not I! Had I made this observation, there would

have been some reason for it: but what can people mean, when the truth is that I complain of their misapplying the parable to the Church? And how do they get rid of our Lord's explanation, that the field means not the Church but the world? "The Church was not formed. It was in deed and in truth, the world then. What else could it be?" Can it be that this trash has been read and passed muster among Anglicans! If so, assuredly they are to be pitied deeply. The Dean of Westminster, it has been shown elsewhere, falls back on an error exactly opposite; for he will have it to be an anticipation of the future, when the Church shall embrace the whole world: a flat contradiction of the Church's essentially eclectic character. Nevertheless, no idea yet broached exceeds in childishness the view so confidently put forth by Mr. W. Is it not obvious that the Lord anticipates the kingdom of heaven, and that the verb "is" or "are," in Matt. 13:37-40, has no reference to the question of the time then present, but is purely explanatory? Thus, He says, in the same conversation, "the harvest is the end of the world (or age); and the reapers are the angels." What would be thought of one who interpreted these clauses of the time then present? Equally groundless is it to speak of the field being "the world then."

The meaning of the parable is plain. Being the kingdom of heaven, it cannot be dated earlier than the Ascension. The good seed of the Word is sown of the Lord in the world, not merely in the land of Israel; and among the children of. the kingdom, Satan afterwards sows spurious professors. But both are viewed as growing together in the field or world; not a word is here intimated about either being in the Church or assembly.

Both wheat and tares are new objects here below; they are not mere good and bad men, but righteous and ungodly professors of Christ in the world. Only at first the tares were not obvious; but they appeared' when fruit was brought forth, and the servants had no difficulty then in detecting them. It is false that the openly wicked are not tares (compare verses 38 and 41), and it contradicts the text itself, that wheat and tares can scarcely be distinguished till harvest (v. 27, 28). On the contrary, the Lord forbids the judgment of the children of the wicked one — not of some, but all — till the end of the age. If this applied really to the Church, it would bind together the godly and the ungodly, yea, the most notoriously reprobate as well as the rest, so as to forbid absolutely every act of discipline; it would contradict the Rubrics of the Establishment, and the rules of every religious society; and still more decidedly the Word of God would be broken thereby.

The truth is, that Christendom is meant; but who guided by Scripture, would call that the Church? All baptized persons, Romanists, Churchmen, Dissenters, "Brethren," are wheat or tares in the field or world of profession. There is no such thing as chaff (p. 35) in this chapter distinct from the wheat and tares. Elsewhere we hear of wheat and chaff, here only of wheat and tares. And the structure of the Greek in verse 38 makes plain to any scholar that as the good seed are co-extensive with the children of the kingdom or the righteous, so are the tares with the children of the wicked one. In other words, the notion that the openly wicked are not included in the tares is positively contradicted by the form of our Lord's interpretation; and if they are included, the argument for unholy communion, as the

Lord's will (may they be forgiven the vile thought!), is destroyed. His instruction here has an aim quite apart from ecclesiastical fellowship. The servants are forbidden to execute judgment on wicked professors, lest misguided zeal might destroy true disciples; for who can say what prodigals or self-righteous men may not yet be brought to God? To spread the gospel, to walk in grace, is the proper business of His servants now: by and by, to angels will fall the work of exterminating vengeance, Our task is to sow the good, not to uproot or destroy the evil. Babylon is in the field, and the voice from heaven says, "Come out of her, my people." No, says the common perversion, "let both grow together till the harvest." If, on the other hand, we can renounce Babylon, and yet both continued to grow together in the field, we can with equal consistency leave every other error and evil condemned by God's Word: Matt. 13 raises no obstacle whatever.

Again, neither does the assembly, or Church appear in the remaining parables. All here is assumption without grounds. The Epistles in general show us corporate responsibility; but there, unquestionably, the wicked are to be put out: which could not be if the field ever became the Church. The Asiatic churches (Rev. 2, 3) are not intended to teach us discipline; but 1 Cor. 5 expressly deals with this point — for some alas! in vain. And, here, the old defamation of the Corinthian church reappears; and excessively dark it is. I have already shown that the application of "Be ye reconciled to God" is mistaken, and that the denial of the resurrection end consequent ignorance of God are exaggerated. Had these men denied the truth, after the Epistle was written, the case would have been far worse; but this

none can say, and 2 Cor. rather leads one to the opposite conclusion. — Again, 2 Cor. 13:2 as it threatens with apostolic discipline, so it in no way implies that they were not believers; and verse 5 argues on the thought that they were in the faith, instead of the common absurdity which Mr. W. shares. For the Corinthians sought a proof of Christ speaking in the apostle (verse 3.) Well then, says he, “examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” — the very last thing these men would allow. Thus, the strength of the reasoning turns on the certainty that they were in the faith. If they wished a proof of Paul’s apostleship, they, as being converted through his preaching, were the proof of it themselves. If they were not in the faith, so far the proof of Christ speaking in Paul was gone. The argument, therefore, supposes that they were in the faith, not that they were not, as Mr. W. assumes. — It is needless to say that the divisions and heresies (or sects) in 2 Cor. 11 do not imply that the disorderly were not real Christians, any more than those who, too confident in their knowledge, made light of idolatrous evil. The rest has been already noticed. I utterly deny that any or all these things make out a parallel between Anglicanism and the church of God in Corinth. The Corinthian church contemplated not the population of the land, but only the sanctified in Christ, only such as were saints by calling, with all that in every place call upon the name of the Lord. The Establishment not merely baptizes anybody, but teaches every one so baptized to say — what is notoriously a falsehood — that in baptism, “I was made a member of Christ, a child of God,” etc. Multitudes of saints in the national body feel the sin of this, if Mr. W. does not; and

very many do not suffer the Catechism to be learnt in their families, nor teach it in their schools. They are ashamed of it, and own that it is unscriptural.3 But the next paragraph (page 38) is perhaps the most extraordinary specimen in the tract. Mr Dobrée was himself my authority for saying that he had gathered from Mr. Darby the thought of a continuous bearing of the Apocalyptic churches (Sep. pp. 16, 17). To Mr. W. any debt of the sort is an affront. “They coolly tell us that we are indebted to them for these truths.” Is not this strange in the face of Mr. Dobrée’s plain words? Does he not know his own source better than his friend? But Mr. W. is still more unfortunate; for he proceeds to tell us that Mr. James Kelly put forward the same view long before Mr. Darby wrote his book or ever went among “Brethren.” Now the truth is that the only works I know of Mr. J. K’s on this subject (which he kindly sent me) strongly controvert any such view, and are apparently the development of a widely different theory thrown out by Dr. S. R. Maitland: namely, future assemblies of believing Jews in Asia Minor. So much for Mr. W.’s knowledge, either of “Brethren” and their writings, or of his own friends, whose wholly opposed schemes he actually imagines to be the parents of our’s!

A very few words will suffice for the rest. One of our worst features is said to be “the notion of sinful impeccability;” but it is simply Mr. W.’s invention. There is hardly a meeting for prayer amongst us, where there is not distinct confession of sins; and so of course yet more in private day by day. Nay, more, I solemnly assure the reader, that we have from time to time assemblies expressly for confessing our sins and the sins of the church at large with fasting and prayer throughout the

day. And something similar has been done on a large scale, where hundreds of brethren who labour in the word and doctrine met for conference and prayer: I have known the first day devoted to united fasting and confession.

Next, some of the wisest brethren notoriously baptize infants: the great majority of the foreign labourers do, if in England most baptize believers. But Mr. W.'s statement, that "they have, by far the greater portion of them, never been baptized," is utterly false. Nobody understood to be unbaptized, would be permitted to break bread. I know "Brethren" well, and I am not aware of an unbaptized person in their midst. How can men commit themselves to language so hasty as to assert what is contrary to the plainest facts? Perhaps Mr. W. may have spoken of the party he last knew in his transit from "Brethren" to the Establishment; but I must say that I exceedingly doubt it of them any more than of ourselves.

Again: all "Brethren" hold that not merely the New Testament, but the entire Word of God is for the Church. I am perfectly convinced that Mr. W. grossly mistook what he heard. What he confounds is the very different proposition that only certain parts of the Word are about the Church. Surely he does not gainsay this who holds that the Church was not formed when our Lord was on earth. It, however, is the simple truth. All Scripture is for our use and guidance; but only the great bulk of the New Testament actually describes and addresses the Church as such. No person who knows what the Church is can gainsay it.

We do believe that, though the Holy Spirit be equally God with the Father and the Son, yet that His personal presence in the Church, as sent down from heaven, accounts for the fact that there is in the New Testament no personal address to His person. We do believe that the true doctrine is “the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ.” But it is a wicked as well as unfounded calumny, that we do not keep the first day of the week holy, though we believe it is the Lord’s-day of grace and resurrection, not the Sabbath-day of creation and the law. We believe, of course, that our Lord fulfilled the law, and we doubt not that all He did end was is part of our acceptance. But this is not the righteousness of God which we are made in Christ. Still less does 2 Peter 1:1 teach righteousness by the law. The meaning unequivocally is, that the saints obtained like precious faith with the apostle through God’s righteousness, or faithful keeping of the promises. It is a question of context whether God and Christ are here classed together, or whether Jesus is not meant to be described as our God and Saviour. But there is no allusion, in either case, to Christ’s keeping the law, but to the righteousness which secured faith to the saints. Even Dr. J. Owen admits that the meaning here is that “it is a righteous thing with God to give faith to them for whom Christ died” (On the Death of Christ, chap. 11, p. 37, ed. 1721).

Finally, so far are we from desiring to destroy or weaken the authority of God’s law, that many “Brethren” (and I among them) strongly object to the Authorized Version of Rom, 7:6, unqualifiedly preferring the marginal rendering to the text. For it is a dangerous error to say that the law is dead. Not so: the believer is dead to the

law, and we are not under the law but under grace; and this, as a question of holy walk (as in Rom. 6), not justification only. Christ, and the entire Bible, are the pattern and rule for the Christian, so that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Hence, the appropriateness of Eph. 6; for if honour paid to the father and mother were emphatically prized under the law and its earthly promises, how much more should children obey their parents under the gospel. “But we know that the law is good if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man [the use to which it is now often and wrongly misapplied], but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners,” etc.

1 Since the above was written, I have procured Mr. B.’s “Lectures,” (ed. 3, 1845), as my remarks referred mainly to his “Exposition.” Now, in Lect. vii. the doctrine is that the first resurrection is special to such Christians as are martyrs or at least sufferers. “Yes, there are Christians, and Christian ministers, who act thus [i.e., oppose pre-millennialism] in our day: and what shall we say of them? That, because believers, they shall reign? No, — we dare not” (p. 277). This he rests on a misapprehension of 2 Tim. 2:12, and also on a passably false criticism respecting 1 Thess. 4:14, as if “in” (literally through) Jesus were the same as on account, or behalf, of Him, which would demand a quite different construction Need it be added that “Brethren” unanimously reject such strange doctrine as this?

2 The remarks in page 29, do not deserve notice. What I censured was the error of making love, in contra-distinction to holiness, either the centre or the principle

of unity: whereas love is rather its energetic motive. The truth is, that Christ is the centre, love the active spring, and holiness the principle of unity according to God and His Word. To call these certain and elementary truths "hair-splitting," is only to expose one's ignorance to spiritual men.

3 Let the reader weigh the following testimony from an able and candid Anglican, whose work I have only seen since writing this tract. "From first to last whether it be for Infant or Adult whether in public or in private; whether the act be the initiatory of Baptism itself, or whether it be, as we have seen, the later process of Confirmation — in all cases alike, the phraseology is unmistakeable. In every instance, without exception, Regeneration — that is, Spiritual Regeneration, including in the ease last mentioned the absolute forgiveness of all sin, is asserted after Baptism, whilst, by the very terms of the Office, it was wanting before it. Why, Rome herself has hardly been more explicit; and we are utterly at a loss to conceive how any one, unbiassed by prejudice, and unwarped in his power of judging by still baser considerations, can possibly attach any other than a Romanizing meaning to words, borrowed, it would appear almost verbatim, from the very Ritual of Rome itself..... It is an undoubted fact, that men who, in the common business of life, act with unswerving consistency upon a totally different rule, hesitate not, in their more solemn capacity as the religious instructors of the people, to assert as true, in every instance, that which they hold to be false in many, and admit, to be doubtful in all." (Fisher's Liturg. Purity, V. pp. 104, 105.) "Both religion and good morals — nay, the very credit of the Gospel itself — are endangered,

and that most seriously, by the use, and still more by the open vindication on the part of confessedly Christian men, of such questionable expedients, as these which have just been noticed.....Certain it is, that the great popular historian of the present day has not thought it beside the purpose of his great and elaborate undertaking to allude in pointed terms to the subject; and emphatically to denounce, as ‘sophisticated,’ that peculiar form of mental aberration which refuses to recognise, in the plain wording of the Baptismal Service, the ‘regenerating virtue’ of the Sacrament” (pp. 116, 117). “The Catechism of the Church of England, remains, to this hour, an essentially Sacramentarian Formulary — admirably adapted, in these days of extended and popular education, to impress the minds of the rising generation with the paramount of the Sacramental system; and thus to depreciate, in their estimation, the value of the more prominent and essential doctrines of the Gospel” (p. 223). “We must not, however, bring this chapter to a close without observing, that the vicarious undertaking of Godfathers and Godmothers which forms so essential a part of the baptismal theory of the Catechism possesses in itself not the smallest sanction from any authority, either human or divine. It is, in all respects, as irrational as it is unscriptural” (p. 239).

The Rev. A. Moody Stuart on "Brethren"

To W. T. P. Wolston, Edinburgh

Dear brother,

Visiting a christian friend in the north of Ireland a short time ago, I glanced over the “Life of Elizabeth, last Duchess of Gordon,” and found in it a statement, which, one must presume, expresses views generally entertained among godly Presbyterians. The copy I saw was the fifth edition (1866): so that the representation there made has gone forth widely and long uncontradicted. As you well know, we are in the habit of letting most of these notices pass without a word, especially where their ignorance and coarseness suffice to refute their ill-will; as of Messrs. Carson, Croskery, D. Macintosh, and suchlike. But the piety and the character of Mr. M. Stuart, who has condescended to no improprieties of the kind, make it desirable to give him a distinct answer. We may be sure that he would not knowingly circulate what is unfounded.

I cite in full from pages 174, 175: “After her decease the charge of Plymouthism was brought against her Grace’s memory. But ‘there must be order in the church’ was the expression of her own sentiments on that head; and while she had valued friends abroad belonging to the communion, there was not one of her associates in Scotland over whom the Plymouth doctrines had any influence. With the ‘Brethren’ the good Duchess had nothing in common, save our common Christianity. Her brotherhood was not like theirs, first severing other

churches and then their own. Their frequent enunciation, ‘He’s a good man, but I could not break bread with him,’ was contrary to every thought and feeling of her heart; for there was no good man throughout the world, with whom she would not have been too happy to sit at the table of the Lord, only counting herself unworthy of the privilege. So with their other peculiarities. In her clear and strong views of the imputed righteousness of Christ she differed from such of them as deny it, and in her love for the Lord’s prayer from those who reject it is legal; in her fervent admiration of nature she differed from others; in her firm belief in the perpetual obligation of the Ten Commandments, and of the Sabbath as one of them, in her appreciation of the inestimable privilege of infant baptism, and in her high value for the christian ministry, she differed from them all.

“Her daily life at Huntly Lodge was a testimony against those doctrines which level all earthly distinctions; a constant witness to the scriptural institution and the attractive beauty of a regulated order in the world,” etc.

Certainly her ordinary way and Mr. M. S.’s biography should sufficiently protect the Duchess from reproach of sympathy with those who are styled Plymouthists by all who in practice sanction the present state of Christendom. Her Grace was a Presbyterian larger-hearted than most, and with this we heartily sympathize. But one who found it so hard a struggle to cast in her lot with the Free-Church movement had certainly not learnt to judge tradition enough to go farther.

But how strange the notion that “there must be order in the church” condemns the very Christians who have left

the disorders of denominationalism, in order to walk, and to walk ecclesiastically too, in subjection to the Lord acting by His word and Spirit! To me it has been for more than a quarter of a century a matter of as much surprise as shame that our brethren who do not even pretend to own the sovereign action of the Spirit in the assembly can venture to use such a text as 1 Corinthians 14:41 (“Let all things be done decently and in order”) against the “Brethren” who alone are acting on it in the simplicity of faith. Why do they not blush to refer to God’s order, which they never think of carrying out from Lord’s day to Lord’s day, which they cannot carry out as the Free, any more than as the Established, Church of Scotland? No intelligent believer can question what was the comely order laid down by apostolic authority. Far be it from us to covet tongues or external signs. They never were the best gifts; they do not, could not, suit the circumstances or moral state of a fallen church. Far from any of us then be the pretension to have all the early church had, or to be wistfully seeking for what, if it could be conceived to reappear, must, as things are, prove a snare.

But here we have the order of God’s assembly for prayer, for singing, for thanksgiving, for prophesying; and if we are God’s assembly, with what face stand any before the Lord who practise habitually a wholly different arrangement, founded on the directly antagonistic principle of one man’s controlling action? Entirely do I believe in and value individual responsibility for preaching the gospel, or instructing disciples, as Paul did in the school of one Tyrannus. We have liberty, we are bound, to use our gifts for Christ. But the christian assembly stands on another footing-the

recognition of His presence therein who divides to each member of the body as He will. “For ye may all prophesy, that all may learn and all may be comforted.” That this is not practised among Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, or others, is too well-known; but will they dare to say it is obsolete? Does the absence of a tongue, or of sign-gifts, annul all the chapter? If they say, Yes, why do such men or women talk about “order in the church,” when they thus blot out by their unbelief and wilfulness the only order in it He ever established? If they say, No, why do they not seek grace and faith to practise His “order in the church?” This it is “Brethren” desire above all things to do: if they are feeble (as indeed they are), why do not those who think themselves strong and wise try to help them? Can they say that they do or even desire this? Can they deny their hostility to those who stand and suffer for God’s order in the church? I humbly think the departed lady and her associates might have been all the better for adding to “our common Christianity” a little deference to the sole order God’s word furnishes for the church.

But we are told that “her [the Duchess’s] brotherhood was not like theirs, first severing other churches, and then their own.” Now is it not universally confessed by all intelligent men that the associations of Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, are not churches or assemblies according to God’s word, but rather such sects or divisions as we are warned to avoid? Is not this felt by those who form the Evangelical Alliance? The difference is that others stay in what they know to be unscriptural, “Brethren” not only own but on principle abandon it as wrong. Who are acting with most conscience, toward God? And if evil doctrine broke out

in the midst of “Brethren” worse than any they had left behind, were they not right and thoroughly consistent. in putting away or abandoning those who would cleave to it? Even if Mr. M. S. had not faith to act thus, he ought not to refuse his sympathy to what is manifestly due to the Lord, unless indeed his predilections, be with those who hold or make light of heterodoxy as to Christ, which 1 should be sorry to think. Certainly, if we departed from nationalism and dissent to fall back on the imperishable truth of God’s assembly and on the Saviour’s presence with those gathered to His name, were we but two or three, it would have ill become us to have preferred our own ease and peace to His name when dishonoured in our midst. Yet for refusing to be parties to union at His expense we are censured: will the Lord blame us for it? I am confident He will not. The blame of others is a light. thing comparatively in our eyes; it may be serious another day for themselves.

“Their frequent enunciation, ‘He is a good man, but I could not break bread with him’“ strikes me as a strange assertion; for in thirty years’ intercourse and ministry in Great Britain, Ireland, France, Switzerland, Holland, Germany, I have never heard such a thought once, even from the least enlightened brother. I do not say that Mr. M. S. has not encountered some such most mistaken and untoward speech, and often too; but I am assured that his acquaintance must have lain with persons wholly unworthy to represent “Brethren’s” principles or practice, wherever this had been their language or feeling. It is their distinguishing feature that the table of the Lord is open to all who are His, where they are known to be walking as such; and this, as a matter, not of courtesy towards them, but of honouring Him in His

members, according to the place they have in the assembly of God. Hence they might not only break bread but speak in worship or to edification, without the smallest violence to their conscience. On the other, hand, where there was deliberate maintenance of, or indifference to, evil against Christ, no name, place or reputation would induce “Brethren” to receive such. We are not so far off then, as Mr. M. S. imagines. “Our common Christianity” goes farther than many think: only act on it, and you will find the hostility, not only of the world, but yet more of worldly Christians. With the same persons you would be the best Christians going if you believed all we believe and stayed where they are, theorising, but dishonest, perhaps breaking bread in every form of disunion to show how much you value unity.

It is probably the same thing with “their other peculiarities.” Thus none of the “Brethren” accept the notion of inherent or infused righteousness as our justification before God; not one but holds that Christ is of God made to us righteousness, and hence that the Lord imputes righteousness to the believer apart from works. Hence we have no sympathy with the Arminian slur (be it J. Wesley’s word or any other’s) that “imputed righteousness is imputed nonsense.” But we do not therefore embrace the hypothesis that imputation means Christ’s obedience of the law imputed to us. Scripture grounds it on Christ’s obedience up to death — the death of the cross whereon sin was judged and God glorified about it; so that it is God’s righteousness to set Christ in heaven and accept us in Him. And we too, having died with Christ, are thereby delivered from the flesh, the law, and the world, as the apostle elaborately

shows; and thus, had we been the most zealous of Jews, we are no longer under law, having died to that wherein we were held and belonging to another, even to Him who is risen from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

Again, while admitting that mistaken things have been said by many “Brethren,” I had never heard of one daring to say the Lord’s prayer was legal, or to reject it as legal; nor could any right-minded soul among them yield to the Duchess in love for it. The question does not lie here at all; but whether the accomplishment of redemption did not lay a new basis for believers, when, as the Lord Himself told them, they should ask the Father in His name, and this by the Spirit given to them. Hitherto (He said, long after they had been taught the prayer) they hid asked nothing in His name. To go on as before is disrespect both to Christ’s work and to the presence of the Holy Ghost, ignoring and slighting Christ’s own words.

Nor is it true that men of calm and holy judgment among “Brethren” disparage the beauty of nature. God forbid! Only it is possible that the Duchess made sight-seeing or the cultivation of flowers an object of her life, in a way which most of us feel to be beneath a Christian. (Compare 2 Cor. 5:15-17; Col. 3:1-4.)

As to the perpetual obligation of the Ten Commandments and of the Sabbath, there is a radical difference: not that “Brethren” hold, as many did at the Reformation and since, that the law is abrogated, but that we, Christians, have died with Christ and are risen with Him and are hence on a ground to which the law never did and never can apply. Such is the doctrine of

the New Testament (Rom. 6:15; Rom. 7:1-6; Rom. 10:1-6; 1 Cor. 15:56, 57; 2 Cor. 3; Gal. 2-5 1 Tim. 1:9). Accordingly it teaches that we meet to remember Christ in His Supper on the first day, the resurrection or Lord's day, not on the seventh or sabbath day which beheld His grave. (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16; Rev. 1:10.) It is really sorrowful and humiliating to have to defend the simplest, most fundamental, truth thus lost sight of by well-meaning souls who are, as usual, stern and sharp and haughty against all who have learnt a little beyond themselves.

Evidently neither the late Duchess nor Mr. M. S understands this, the liberty wherewith Christ makes free; and their lack of acquaintance with it lies at the. bottom of their inability to appreciate the position taken by "Brethren" as to righteousness and the law. Only such persons should take heed what they say or whereof they affirm, as the apostle admonishes.

Further, many more than Mr. M. S. will be astonished, I dare say, to hear that what he calls "the inestimable privilege of infant baptism" is appreciated by a great number of those who by their adversaries are styled Exclusives, Darbyites, and such-like nicknames.

One of these also, in speaking for all, long ago explained that we have the highest value for Christian ministry in every kind and measure, prizing nothing more than its freest exercise in responsibility to the Lord, and objecting to nothing but un-christian ministry. It certainly does seem to us childish, if not presumptuous, to hear how these good people flatter themselves that they differ from us in their "high value for the christian ministry." They are sincere but under the merest

illusion. Did the Duchess really differ from us in the principle? How came her biographer to make such assertions? The Scotch are believed to be a reading public. They ought then to have known better. For if their denominationalism sunders them from us, our writings are accessible enough and should be weighed before they write about what they so little understand.

It is well-known, that “Brethren” in general are utterly opposed to what is called radicalism; and that they were long ridiculed at first as a knot of high Tory gentlemen and ladies, unable to endure either the corruptions of Anglicanism or the vulgarity of dissent, and so establishing a sort of Madeira climate for their delicate lungs. Thus an infidel leader once wrote in one of the most respectable reviews of the Nonconformist party.

We may express some surprise too at the quarter whence such a charge emanates against us; for Scottish Presbyterians have been thought only less democratic than English Congregationalists, neither of them being usually considered remarkable for their loyalty or their lowliness.

Finally, life at Huntly Lodge may have been worthy of all respect as opposed to levellers, and a fair specimen of a “regulated order in the world;” but for this very reason, on Mr. M. S.’s own showing, it could not be a real testimony to death with Christ from the rudiments of the world. It was an effort to live in the world aright, not the walk of those consciously risen with Christ and seeking the things.above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

You are at liberty to use what I now write, for the correction of errors and the help of all who would know the truth.

Yours affectionately, W. K.